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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF
ENGLISH



First Edition.

By Charles Jeremiah Wells 1800-1879

See Literary Anecdotes of the XIX Century by
W. H. Mitchell & J. J. Wain 1895 Herbert Heathton
pp 291-315 for "Anatomical Stone" intended
to be incorporated in a new edition which
"a never came into effect."

First edition page

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JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN,

A SCRIPTURAL DRAMA;

IN TWO ACTS.

BY

H. L. HOWARD.

"The Devil spoke, * * * * *
* * * * * well you know
How many ages, as the years of men,
This universe we have possessed; and ruled,
In manner at our will, the affairs of earth,
Since Adam and his facile consort Eve
Lost Paradise, deceived by me; *though since*
With dread attending, when that fatal wound
Shall be inflicted by the seed of Eve
Upon my head."

"But if there be in glory aught of good,
It may by means far different be attained;
Without ambition, war, or violence,
By deeds of peace, by wisdom eminent,
By patience, temperance."—MILTON. *P.A. 3. 1. 5.*

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PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

JACOB, *the Patriarch.*

REUBEN.

SIMEON.

LEVI.

DAN.

JOSEPH.

JUDAH.

ISSACHAR.

ZEBULUN.

NAPHTALI.

BENJAMIN.

Jacob's Sons.

PHARAOH, *King of Egypt.*

POTIPHAR, *a Ruler.*

PHARAOH'S BUTLER.

CHIEF BAKER.

STEWARD.

PHRAXANOR, *Potiphar's Wife.*

ATTENDANT ON PHRAXANOR.

ISHMAELITES, MAGICIANS, OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS,

GUARDS, EGYPTIANS, HARVESTMEN, &c.

ERRATA.

Page line

- 2 8 *for sineous read sinuous.*
12 15 *for be-kird read be-curd.*
21 20 *for this honey—Reuben read this honey'd Reuben.*
38 10 *for REUBEN read REUBEN (aside.)*
106 23 *for ebed read ebbd.*
108 7 *for lover-trophies read love-trophies.*
135 11 *for What a devil read What—a devil.*
200 2 *for holy read holly.*
212 7 *for Exit attended read Exit attendant.*
222 2 *for pastimes read pastures.*
238 13 *for How read Now. ..*

PREFACE.

IN the perusal of this Volume it will appear I have availed myself of the title "Scriptural *Drama*," rather than Dialogue, as being more favourable to the just presentment of the thoughts and feelings of man in a wild and wilful state of nature, as well as the impassioned pathos of the story itself. In doing this it has not been my intention to transpose the text and suit the story to the

Drama, but to suit the Drama to the story.

With respect to the leading character after the second Chorus, I must confess I was rather puzzled. To take it as it stood, I could not, nor could I leave it out; ~~and~~ I had the alternative either to exalt it in its vice or to sink it into monotony. The latter I was led to decline, for my own sake as well as the Reader's. The Book from which I was transcribing offered me a precedent, (truth is modesty, if false delicacy is affectation, passion becomes sentiment when purified by the moral and so commended to true delicacy,) and I have taken as a precedent the Bible which is full of the acts of passion and nature, and gives us the unqualified evil that we may apply the moral. To represent a

woman exalted and abandoned, artful, voluptuous and cruel, I feel with the reader is a distasteful point in nature—but it is nature.

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,
Dec. 2, 1823.

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JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.



A C T I.

CHORUS.

IN the dim age when yet the rind of earth
Unworn by time gave eager nature birth,
Zealous to furnish what the seasons wore
That in a vigorous brightness flourished ;—
When light, and dark, and constellations bright,
The splendid Sun, the silent gliding Moon
Govern'd men's habits ; taught them when to thrive,
To rest and sleep, till, full of temp'rate years,
Rude in their art, and ignorant of all
But passions and affections wild, untaught,
They sank like giants in an earthy pit.
Leaving the generation of their days
'Twixt grief and rev'rence to mourn their deaths
And miss them from the village and the field.
God's voice (that mingled up the beauteous world,
Inlaid pure Heav'n, and sweetly colour'd it ;

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B

And with the wondrous magic of the clouds
Enveils the sacred flooring evermore,
Without bright golden, but within more rare)
Was then upon the earth ; and with men's ears
Creating reverence and faith and love—

Jacob was gone into the vale of years,
And like an oak that standeth by a hill
Whose sineous trunk begins to fret to dust,
And sapless knots fail in their iron strength ;
Whose wrinkled branches drying up with age,
Stiff to the winds, with top emblanch'd and bare,
Though but poor spoil to winter in its leaves,
Yet still it casts a shadow o'er those slips
That from its acorns dropt into the earth
From time to time : and settled, flourish there
To keep its memory fresh in seasons new
When it is wither'd to the sodden core,
And all its beauty faded from the earth.
Like to that tree that faileth on the hill
Is aged Jacob with the wither'd arms ;
And like its fruit that chanc'd to spring and grow,
Are Jacob's sons that put their promise forth ;
And like the guardian shadow from the tree
Is Jacob's yearning full of love for them.
To Bethel was he come with all his host,

His herds and flocks, and men both bond and free,
By God's command to sojourn in the land.
Down in a valley deep and overbrow'd
With sloping pastures skirted round with beech
Shadowing the grazing cattle in the breeze,
E'en in this vale of Hebron did he halt,
And set his tent (rude habitation)
To wait with patience the will of Him
Supreme in Heaven, and Earth ; for he had said
" Thy seed shall grow and flourish in the land,
" Outnumb'ring the sea-sand. Grace shall be yours.
" My countenance is with thee. Go, and live."

Of all his sons, Joseph, a gentle youth,
Young in years, graceful, and full of strength,
Pleas'd Jacob most ; most fill'd his doting mind,
Nourish'd his sight, and charm'd his doubting ear.
Well might it be ; for he was yet the child
Of his declining years, reflecting on
His youthful vigour in those passed days
When the grown men Reuben and Simeon
Were yet but children gleaning in his corn,
Merry, and apt to profit by that lore,
(Or rather simple industry) that kept
The image of their Maker fine and clear
With wholesome viands, food of a beaded brow.

Rachel his wife, and Joseph's mother, died
Midway between this Bethel and her home ;
And solemnly she was laid up in earth
Hard by the highway, and a pillar set,
Call'd by her name ; a Tomb of elder years,
Old monument of man's affection !
For this he lov'd young Joseph, but the more
That he was kind and tender to his sire ;
Sober'd his youth, and calm'd his sprightly tongue ;
And like a mantle warm and comfort-lin'd
Cover'd his father from all outward frets :
And love for love return'd in such a sort,
So full of rev'rence, mild, and duteous,
That it flow'd blandly from his genial breast
And mingled in his being, making his sire
Taste the sweet sympathy of unripe age,
Which could not be in those his other sons
More old, more independent in their love.
But there was mischief to this human faith
Born of the very goodness that it bred,
For Joseph's brethren fretted on the lip,
Wrinkled their brows, and smote upon the earth
With boist'rous foot, whence envy leaped out.
The best would group together in the shade
And sitting 'neath the eglantine and vine
That wreath'd a verdurous trellis through the vale,

Would scoff at Jacob's love, that still was spilt
(As they would say) unequal on that side
Where Joseph kept his stand. Envy, the slug,
Had ta'en its second change, and like a worm
Stray'd from its blinder chrysalis the brain,
And nimble as the blood that scours the veins
Lay keenly gnawing in their bleeding hearts.

The shepherd beats his bell, the tranquil herds
Lowling obedience from the freckled spring,
(Where the bright flowers disturb'd with their sweet breath
Tremble like starry gems in Dian's hair)
Slow wind the hill, and in their staked folds
Snuff the fresh straw and scent the keener wind,
Crook their sleek knees to welcome night's repose.
The Sun was sinking from his daily round
And starr'd the Heavens like a fiery flaw,
Shewing his glory greater than the west.
Glancing the Moon and frightening her faint beam,
Across the barred portals of the East
His fulgent heat reflected glowing fire.
The dying embers of the burnish'd king,
Low sunk behind the mountain'd hemisphere,
Were fading fast away. He was declined
(Not like pale Cynthia to her bath a lake
Rich in its violet sward and jasmine bow'rs)

A god gigantic habited in gold,
Stepping from off a mount into the sea,
The evening breeze that whispers of repose,
And fans the crimson'd marygold to sleep,
Grew sharp and brisk ; and silence on the light
Gain'd step for step, as light retir'd to shade.
The tawny harvest men from yellow fields
Their sweet repast, their lated meal enjoy'd
Hard by their tents beneath some ample oak,
Or vine, or fig-tree burthen'd with its fruit
And fragrant to the air. Now Jacob's sons
Who kept their herds and cattle on the hills
Retire from folding to their father's tent.—
Lo ! Joseph meets them with a welcome smile,
A basket on his head with purple grapes
O'erswelling from the brink ; and o'er his cap,
And hair, and shoulders, hanging gracefully
Shews like an angel, or if less, at least
A God o' th' woods.—Stifle your spleens, young men ;
Dull not this image of your father's mind
By vaporous suggestions of his youth,
Which oversteps you in the old man's sight.
Look on his youth ; be older, and be wise.

SCENE.—*Outside of Jacob's Tent.*

Enter REUBEN, SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN,
DAN, NAPHTALI ; *and* JOSEPH *meeting them.*

ISSACHAR.

The weed is at the threshold of our tent
To sting us as we enter. My eye is gall'd,
Seeing how merely all our frowns are lost
And oversmoothed in his courtesy.

REUBEN.

My brother, you say right. Like to the wind
That gently sleeks the rugged lion's mane,
Sings in his ears, and daunts his savage eye ;
So he your anger woos with kindly breath ;
Laughs out of mirth ; and looking in your face,
E'en wonders at your wrath.

SIMEON.

This Reuben says :

Fruits of his milky disposition.
He cares nothing for our father's love,
Regard, or praise, or ancient tenderness ;
The honour of attending on a flock
Increasing daily 'neath the watchful eye
Of a wise shepherd ; husbanding the grain
Craftily sown, with sweating labour gather'd,

And garner'd up with skill: all this is nought:
 Knowledge of seasons, lusty pastures green
 That fill the cow with milk and fat the lamb.
 The honour and regard which this should buy
 Is cast about our brother like a cloud;
 Yet no more muffled than the goodly Sun
 When he begilds the clouds. This new found star,
 This boy has all the praise, the labour we;
 'Till like a drone he slumbers in our sweets.

REUBEN.

I've heard your speech, and freely pardon it.

SIMEON.

'Tis just to hate, when love is canker'd thus,
 And less than nothing swallows up the whole.
 And let me tell you, Reuben, if you fall
 Within the limit of my boisterous speech,
 So that my censure graze thy patience——

REUBEN.

Come, peace. I pr'ythee, peace.

SIMEON.

Nay, I will speak

REUBEN.

of me.

Hold, Simeon! you'll get no tea
 I am no child to rid you of your spleen,
 Nor will I back one step for thee or thine.
 Silence!—I do command thee. What art thou,

Thou younger brother, second unto me,
That thus presum'st on my temperance?—
Because my heart is milky, as you say,
And I am nimble, full of exercise,
Not cold and sullen ; laugh when the sun shines bright,
Sing, and rejoice, light as the summer air,—
Out of your gloom and stately pondering
Are you, at once to carve away the love
I bear yourself, my brother, and my sire ;
To task my courage and to tempt it too?—
Oh trust me, Simeon, I have a gall,
(Though commonly 'tis overlaid with love)
And such a one, that had the father's son
Of any sire from hence through Canaan
But cast such sore and undeserving words
On my forbearance, had he thrice thy breadth,
And thrice thy skill, I would have grappled him
And took his heart ; but, Simeon, to thee,
With whom so many seasons I have watch'd,
So many summers tended in the fields,
So many winters sojourn'd in the tent,
So many autumns gather'd in the grain,
So many springs re-laid it in the earth ;
So many days have fed from the same board ;
So many nights repos'd on the same skins ;
I owe a bulk of fellowship and love.

Can I forget the many days gone by,
The weeks, and months, and comfortable years,
And raise my hands in any other way
Than thus outspread to clasp you to my neck?—
Lo! see young Joseph weeps.—

ISSACHAR.

So do not I.

REUBEN.

The worse for Issachar.

JOSEPH.

Oh my brethren!

Come not to words for such a thing as I.
I am but worth your loves and not your wrath,
Which never shews but it augments my grief.
What have I done, or wherein thought amiss?
If to our Sire I am dutiful,
It is because his happiness is mine:
I do no more than every youthful Son
Should practice on the age of such a Sire.
No end have I in this, indeed; no wish
To put your image further from his breast,
Blemish your names, (a thing I never thought)
Or place my childhood 'fore your graver years.
Perhaps you think your birthright tempts me on;
That I would work upon our Father, so
That all your well-earn'd interest should to seed,

While mine would bloom and grow?—Why this is weak :
For still the pow'r is yours to take it back,
(And justice, too) for cozening the age
Of our good Sire. Yet this must be the cause :
For nought else I have done, I'm well assur'd,
But tend my Father as my duty bids.—
Forget your frowns ; and throw my innocence
Food to your hate, and grieve the while 'tis raven'd.

ISSACHAR.

I have a mind to strike him.

JUDAH.

Patience awhile :

Offer no spleen before our Father's tent ;
Each one pass by him mute, and each unload
The burthen of contempt full in his eye.

REUBEN.

Love, like the dew upon the myrtle tree
Is thus bedashed with a raven wing,
And swath'd in its own fragrance.

ISSACHAR.

Perhaps 't may kill him. I will lead the way.

REUBEN.

Oh ! you do keep your pity in a cage
And whip it to a starv'd obedience.—
Our Father comes.

(*Enter JACOB.*)

JACOB.

What's this ?—Cannot I kneel
And breathe my ev'ning prayer for your preserving,
But you will fright the Angel from my thought
With waspish clamour from your evil throats ?—
Come hither, Joseph.—Up, my boy ; ne'er weep—
Cast down the grapes, the fruits and figs you bear
That were to sup their graceless, hungry lips—
Down with them in the mire close to their feet ;
And, since they throw away the love of men
As 'twere but the contemned rind of life ;
Like their own oxen let them stoop and feed
Befitting their wild passions ; for I swear,
Nought shall they eat or drink from off my board
Until the dawn ; nor then, unless their love
Be-kird and thicken, and their anger melt,
Like icicles, away.

JUDAH.

We grieve, indeed,
That you, so partial, stint us of your love.

JACOB.

A lie !—a lie !—You envy this young slip.
Wilt thou teach me, thou climbing, scanty elm,
With joints unsettled, and with eye amaz'd,
Full of fantastic ignorance and youth ;

Me, who have kept my brow upon men's deeds
More than six times thine observation—
(Being so much more thine age, six times as wise,
Stricken in body, but mature in mind)
Will you tell me your love makes beasts of ye?—
Do I not know when favours are bestow'd
On young deservers, ye who lag behind
Make wings of envy ; forked round with spleen ;
And, like the foul and ugly bats of night,
Fan him to sleep, and from an artery
Directly channell'd from the heart, you suck
More valiant blood ?—I have a fear of you,
For envy might lead men to cast poor stones
At heaven while it thunders. Death waits on it.
It feeds on hatred and hideous dreams,
And, like a serpent, tracks its victim's heels.
In meanness it begins, proceeds to blood,
And dies of sallow horror by itself.
If it could take the glory that it stabs,
It were more nobly bad ; but bad indeed,
While it but sweeps it from before its eye,
And like a spider (but more like a flower)
Blends it to earth beneath a frictious foot.

JOSEPH.

Oh, Sir ! long time my brothers must have seen
That I may often grieve, but cannot hate.

But sith more patience doth beget more spleen,
More tameness harsher words, more grief desire ;
I shall take up the manhood they let fall,
Retreat to what defence of mind I have,
And, fortified with knowing honesty,
Tremble no more like to a troubled spring
That every hail-drop shakes with timid fear ;
But front them and confront them as I may :
Like to a brother answering their rebukes
With all the sense and wisdom that I have ;
Not like my Father's bondmen in the stall.—
Why should I not ? They act as if the world,
And all the nations wide, and cities wall'd,
Were no such things : as if this spot of ours,
Our fields, our cattle, were the all in being.—
Would they be envious, let them be great ;
Envy old cities, ancient neighbourhoods ;
Great men of trust, and iron-crowned kings ;
For household envy is a household rat ;
Envy of state a devil of some fear.
For me—this Bethel prescribeth not my sight ;
For in imagination I can see
Countries beyond, nurs'd by the wit of man,
Wiser in harvest, greater in defence,
With state and pomp and majesty serene :
E'en in my sleep my mind doth eat strange food

Enough to strengthen me against this hate.
With you, my brethren, I was binding sheaves,
When mine arose and stood in front of your's,
And your's bent grievous low unto the ground ;
Nay, more, (yet think me not irreverend)
The sun, the moon, and the eleven stars
Sank, and obey'd me ; which is sure a sign
That I am greater than my Sire and ye ;
Whether in love, or act, I leave to time.
Perhaps Heav'n of purpose put this in my view,
Or else my mind being troubled of the grief
Of your displeasures, vain of some great power,
Fancied this sleeping. I do not know,
But feel resolv'd no more to plague my heart,
While you, my brothers, treat me with such scorn.

JACOB.

Joseph, the eye of Heaven is on thee :
Shall I and all thy brethren bow us down ?—
So be it, if the will of God be so ;
And this thy dream foretelleth such event.

SIMEON.

The moon is risen, shall we in and sup ?

JACOB.

No—not with me ; your faces are too dull.
Moody displeasure sits upon your brow,
And conscious malice being over-aw'd

Turns short upon disgust. The time has been
When I have govern'd well the nimble flail
From morning until night ; bedash'd the grain,
And stiffen'd not with labour ; now I am old :
But could I borrow from my lusty youth ;
This staff I carry here to stay my steps
Should strike obedience from you.—Go, and mend !—
Reuben, will you come in ?

(Exeunt Jacob and Joseph.)

REUBEN.

All honour to my Father. I am pleas'd
To tend my brothers in the outward tent.

SIMEON.

So—Reuben, is this well? It cannot last.

ISSACHAR.

Oh surely not ; for those who run so swift
Must stop for want of breath.

LEVI.

I know not, I :

Yet I do think our honest services
Deserve a better treatment than they meet.

NAPHTALI.

I hate this Joseph.

JUDAH.

So, Naphtali, do I ;
He frets me like a thorn beneath the skin.

Not Jacob's anger, nor a host of Sires
Can breed so much affection in my heart
E'en as a drop of dew.

ZEBULUN.

Oh, I am sick !—

Why should a fellow here, made up of dreams,
With blue and beaming eyes and snaking hair,
Born after us so far, so green in years,
Vault like a nimble leaper at one jump
Between our Sire and us, and charm his sight
Like to a subtle serpent in a brake :
As well to build a wall 'tween us and him,
And place us outward.

DAN.

When I was young I was not spoiled at nurse,
Turn'd in the winter forth to break the ground ;
In burning summer made to drive afield ;
Fasting and thirsting, often have I cast
My tired body 'neath a shady tree,
Too overwrought to seek our shelter out.
What is this Joseph made of.—This nice youth,
That he to manhood claims a dainty way ?
What are his limbs that they must clothe so new ?
What is his head that it must lie so soft ?
What is his mettle, when the most he does,
Is, storm a wild Bee's nest ?

C

SIMEON.

Thou oracle and champion of all this,
Reuben, I pr'ythee in cool reason say,
Out of thine abstract honesty of thought,
Does not our Father 'bate us in regard,
Labour to lay it upon Joseph's head ;
And at all times by thought and word and deed,
O'erlooking us, reflect on him a worth
That he has neither earned nor deserv'd ?
Lastly, his passion borders on revenge ;
Suspicion leaps to serve him to the brink
Even of blood. He sees us like to shades
With instruments of death and brows severe
Ready to 'stroy the image of the mind.

REUBEN.

No more! No more!—come, let us in and sup.
This awkward after-quest of thine bespeaks
The evil that you deprecate, as truth.
Shame comes of such equivocation.

SIMEON.

This will not serve. You cannot answer me.

REUBEN.

Nor am I bound : for if I sometimes speak
For general quiet and the love of peace,
I bargain not to hunt each flying thought
That breaketh cover from thy brambly mind ;

But sith I see contempt upon thy front,
Forestalled triumph in thy sullen eye ;
I'll answer thee, and with the plain truth
Defend myself, defeat thy question
That in quaint cunning terms me champion.
I'll give thee ground, and shame thee.—Say, our Sire
Garlands his sprightly Joseph with his love,
Keeps him like honey in the winter stor'd
To feast the scanty comfort of his age :
Old men are full of years and full of pain,
The world's worn out to them, novelty is dead :
Say they can cheat rude sadness with some joy
That lives in fancy and beguiles the mind,
Is he not cruel who such comfort lames
(Like a rich beggar of a precious thing)
Crying ' Give me, I pr'ythee thy regard ;
I am right worthy, and I cannot bear
To see your dotage sloven'd on a child ? '
In sooth, I inwardly rejoice to see
The lucid pleasure in our Father's eye,
(Like to the sun piercing a wat'ry cloud)
When Joseph sings, or speaks a merry thought.
The pang of envy touches not my breast ;
And did you love our Sire, you'd rather be
The most forgotten reed upon a pipe,
Than mar the harmony his choice could breed,

With the loud discord of your ill content.
Say Jacob's choleric and sharp of speech ;
It ever was the trick of thwarted age.
Why, ye are choleric and wrath, though young.
And, trust me, Sirs, ill thoughts will aye grow old,
Nor die before the man : rather, as weeds
That overgrow the rotten outer fence,
Get ranker in their age. Your fault lies here ;
All excellence in others you expect,
Ne'er looking backward to the lack within.
What right have you, ye disobedient boys,
To tax our Sire, whether right or wrong ?
Is it his milky beard that makes ye bold ?
His honour'd head grac'd with the remnant curls ?
His shoulders stoop'd, upholden by a staff ?
His body worn to keep you warm in youth ?
Is it because his love is old and good
That rear'd you up, gave you your flocks and herds,
And taught you how to tend them and to thrive,
And kept you from the stalls of other men,
Base bond-men hir'd for a scanty meal ?
Is it because he holds you dear and warm
E'en as the life-blood coursing through his heart ?
Trust me, my brethren, he hath good cause
(Though it appears not but to those who think)
Why he should hug young Joseph to his heart.

Rachel, his mother, died by the way,
Whom Jacob lov'd with rare affection ;
And he, too, falling past his mellow years,
With earthly love grew fond of this same youth,
As men do cling unto the hope of life
E'en in the horrid hour of stiff death,
So age doth fondle o'er the acts of youth,
And half re-lives those joys and hopes again ;
When fine imagination calls them up,
(Like to a cheerful and indulgent witch)
Making an hour of such deep repose
Worth all the life to come. Indeed, indeed,
Such things as these will meddle with the heart.
Come, Brethren, let us in and woo our Sire,
For it is dangerous, and tempting Heaven
To harbour hate, where duty bids us love.

SIMEON.

Well I will go, yet 'tis against my will :
My feet obey your words ; my mind remains
In stubborn pain, the pris'ner of my breast.

ISSACHAR.

This honey—Reuben, steals away my brain.—
Well, I will in ; be gay and cheerful too ;
That he may think my anger cheaply bought
For a few sugar'd words. (Exit.)

SCENE—*The outside of JACOB's Tent.—Time, Noon.*

(JACOB and JOSEPH.)

JACOB.

Keep thou this counsel sacred in thine ear,
For 'tis a treasure richer than a star.

JOSEPH.

Sir, I am prone to love it, apt to think,
To find fresh proofs; and I have wonder'd oft
How many tribes and nations overlook
God's greatness in his works, and cast the praise
Upon some lifeless object deified—
Out of the grossness of their earthward mind.
To me a simple flower is cloth'd with thoughts
That lead the mind to Heav'n.

JACOB.

Why that is much :

For there's no work, the meanest on the earth,
Matter, or thing, but 'tis so nicely cast
By the great Master-hand, and so set off
In beauty's mask, or else consistent truth,
That he must have a mind that's all contempt,
Jealous, and crude, who could deny the work
To have been pattern'd by a Deity:
Or else his knowledge, aiming past the heavens,

Falls back upon his ignorance and dies.
Many there be who worship certain stars,
The ruling planet, or some lesser light,
Or some rude image wrought of their own hands,
Being brim-full of self. Ill sense of being,
To contemn the giant and applaud the dwarf,
Because the first is greater than ourselves ;
And keep imagination in the slips,
While Faith, a pris'ner wrapt about in chains,
Stands blind beside. Oh, lowly ignorance !
To think the Being, who could fashion us,
Give us impassion'd minds and strong affections,
Put fire into the sun, and poize the world,
Garnish the seasons, and clothe all the earth
Beauteous and varied, and over all
Cast such a canopy as this above,
Would meanly hide him in a common space,
The poorest of his fancies. Rather think
That God looks on our earth invisible,
And fills the mighty space above our heads
With splendour and glory (being so rare with us)
More than the mind of man dare ape to think.

JOSEPH.

Late as I lay upon a shock of corn
With musing eye following my dreamy thought,
Likening the clouds to cities far away,

A falcon sail'd majestic in my view :
This way and that he turn'd his peering head
(Like a besieger in a peaceful town)
Keen and sagacious, bent on shedding blood,—
Herein, saith I, doth God proclaim himself ;
The many excellencies of this one thing
All tending to some purpose apt and wise,
An object answer'd and an end attain'd ;
Yea, more than man seeing can comprehend,
Or comprehending, can admire enough,
Being a brighter image last design'd
And form'd to rule and govern ; be obey'd
By all earth's creatures, subjects of his will.
I doubt not God's existence nor his pow'r,
Am touch'd with reverence, and touch'd with love.
The golden mazes of the serpent's scales
Dazzling the light and foiling the sun's beams,
Odours of violets blooming in the spring,
The bird that chuckleth in the murky vale,
Silence and noise, the tranquil light and shade,
The orient sun-flower, and the blossom'd spray,
The dell and mountain, waters bosom'd wide,
In wordless eloquence unto the heart
Speak of sweet grace, and pow'r, and beauty rare.
God did descend to form such excellence ;
We must ascend to comprehend it done,

Then what is He who mouldeth all these things,
Merely, as 'twere, for exercise of truth ?
And what are we who look on them and die ?
The children of His mercy ? nor forlorn
And cold into our bosoms will return
Our mortal yearnings, seeing we're allied
To all the truth and beauty He hath made ;
For He who fashion'd us from forth his love,
Made us so fair, surrounded us with good ;
Out of His love will think of us in death.

JACOB.

Joseph, my comfort, you beguile my ears—
Yea, and my eyes of some few gentle drops :
I bless thee from the middle of my heart.
Yet, Joseph, there is one thing far above
Matters extern and objects of the view ;
It is, the mind of man, frank fellowship ;
A fair affection brac'd and bounded in
By honesty and love, in word and deed—
Yea, more, in thought and look ;
E'en in the faintest limits of surmise :
Never to bear your neighbour hard in hand,
Nor break your faith, nor trespass on his peace ;
So as you hope the pow'r above will deal
With mercy to thine imbecility.
This must be thine ; then will thy hours be glad,

Joyful thy days, thy years be long and full :
Calamity, the giant of the earth,
Will know thee free, and veil his iron club,
Saying to sorrow, ' Visit not that man,
He looks beyond us :—Ill men fear his frown ;
All good tongues drop of manna to his praise.'

JOSEPH.

Years and desire, leading in their hands
Knowledge and wisdom, will sow full my time
With the fresh seeds of this most ruling truth ;
And God, the master both of it and us,
Seeing a simple and a willing child,
As helpless as a flower in the wind,
Will give me patience to bear those rubs
That stand betwixt a mortal and his grave.

JACOB.

Amen ! Amen ! Oh Joseph ! what a joy
Thy words diffuse over my latter life.
Thy voluble tongue, sweet as a viol play'd
To heavenward anthems in a mellow eve,
Lives in my contemplation with delight.
Thy tongue is but the scholar of thy heart,
Repeating faithfully what that records.

JOSEPH.

Sooth, there is no such merit in all this,
(Though to do duty claimeth some fair praise)

For merit breedeth its own sweet reward,
As vice and folly do their sting and chains.
The little commerce I have had doth shew
There is an honest beauty in the world ;
That he who loves, is lov'd again by it ;
That, like an angel, doth in such a sort
Reflect the worth and value of our deeds,
As evil never knows, nor e'er can taste :
Therefore 'tis wise and gainful to be just ;
Bringing so large a price as fair content
To pay us for our merit.

JACOB.

Live, boy, and be great,—
Go to thy brethren (in Shechem's vales
They keep their herds this day) and bring me word
How they have found the pastures and the springs ;
And if their cattle thrive upon the ground.

JOSEPH.

Your blessing.—I am gone.

(Exeunt Jacob and Joseph severally.)

SCENE.—*A Vale at Dothan.*

REUBEN, SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, DAN,
NAPHTALI, *as Shepherds.*

REUBEN.

I like this Dothan: the air is mild and sweet;
The plain brow'd by the wilderness around
Escapes the vigorous glances of the sun:
The earth, fed with the leaves of autumn
Laid by the wind, like summer's winding-sheet,
Begets a substance and a nourishment;
So that the herbage and the greener food
Thrive within rankness.

ZEBULUN.

The grass is thick with flowers on crisp stalks
Full of the juicy virtues of the place;
The spiky thistle, blue cuckoo, golden heath,
And globed clover full of honey-dew
And sweeter than the cowslip.

ISSACHAR.

It is well:

But I prefer the hardier mountain side,
That's dry and bleak and rough and barely clad.—
The sickly flowers of th' o'er-moisten'd flats
But pulp your cattle with a sullen rot.

This guarding wood fencing the rush of wind
Still keeps the evil close about their hides,
While the hollow blast that rolls about the hills
Would blow them whole and hardy.

NAPHTALI.

Was it not

In some such place as this, since many years,
When we were taking honey through the woods,
Some dozen wolves, whetting their gory fangs,
Had got about a heifer hunted down
And mangled to the bones: then we leapt in
And with our trav'ling staves with iron heads
Gave battle to them, having made a ring;
And, spite of savage opposition,
We put such mettle in our dang'rous play,
As slew them all?

DAN.

I do remember, too,

That Reuben had a cloak made of their skins
In honour of our sport; or rather that
We thought him coward, giv'n to trembling,
But found the sinews of his courage grew
The stronger with the danger; for Issachar
Being beset, having more work than hands,
He leapt into the peril, and by dividing
Defeated it.

ISSACHAR.

It was brave work, I swear.

SIMEON.

No, do not.

ISSACHAR.

What?

SIMEON.

Swear : Reserve thy oath,

For lo ! now by the brow of yonder hill

Comes one who more deserves it at your hands

Than idle thoughts.

ISSACHAR.

I had no oath to swear ;

Or if I had, whoe'er he be that comes,

It could not be forestall'd. I have no feud,

No quarrel now in hand with any man.

SIMEON.

Bethink thee, and then look.

ZEBULUN.

'Tis Joseph comes !

ISSACHAR.

If it be so, I do recal my peace ;

Not leaving so much to my fingers' ends

As keeps the stone from flying from my hand.

Are we not even to be fear'd ?

SIMEON.

Why what cares he ? Our hate and his content
Are bond and free : we ever bound to frown,
While he is pleas'd to smile because we frown.
He doth usurp our place and privilege,
Counting the sweats of all our cares and pains
With young and wanton eye, most like unto
Some steward's son : keeps tent when th' earth is damp,
Or the sun, too impudent, looks hotly out ;
And airs for appetite in soothing eves,
Which needs is sickly, being got as 'tis,
Of idleness, not sweating industry,
Wherefore his dishes must be nicely sauc'd,
While we crib in the hedge, and dip at springs.

ISSACHAR.

I love my dog somewhat, for he will share
My watchfulness and patience, but were he
To have reserved, the profit of my thrift,
The sweet and precious virtue of my gains,
House in a cage of gold, and on the woof
Of soft Egyptian cloth, supinely cribb'd,
Slumber in gorged sloth, while I was tim'd
To face the elements. I could not loathe
His bestial and detested privilege
More than I do this brother Joseph's face,
Who looks so sightly on our grievances.

SIMEON.

Yonder he comes. Look ! Issachar,
How merry and how wayward in his walk,
Poising his staff for very idleness.

ISSACHAR.

My eye dooms him.—It is he.

NAPHTALI.

That coat of many colours which he wears
Spotted about with our dear Father's love,
Is foully spotted ; for in every one
A favour sticks that 's gather'd at our hand,
And in its place neglect and scorn are left,
Making him rich and proud in the array
That's borrow'd of our smiles and temperance.

DAN.

Our coats be of one colour, so should his.

ISSACHAR.

Why let it then, nor mumble o'er your wrongs
Like feeble women at a friend's decease ;
But raise your hands and brush your grief away.
That coat he honoureth with all his heart
Should wear its livery. If it were steep'd
In sundry drops of blood let loose from thence,
Its colour were more sightly to our eyes.
A puling, whimpering boy—he is no more—
And he to keep our number on the fret

With all this bone and sinew on our side!—
I have no patience that we are so tame!

DAN.

Go to! I am not tame—that's not my case.

ZEBULUN.

Nor mine.

LEVI.

Nor mine.

SIMEON.

And yet this is not all.

Some little we could bear and wink upon :
To be the puppet of our Father's age,
Keep house, the stores, o'erlook the vintages ;
All nice employments (far too nice for us):
Yet, with a stretch of patience this could pass,
And he might live, and we could bear his sight,—
Not so when, thus o'ersurfeited with ease,
He takes exceptions to our wearied worth,
And sleeps to dream that we are but his slaves,
Must all bow down and kiss the earth to him ;
In musing visions artfully contriv'd
Throws a bright glory round about himself
Casting on us the shadow of contempt ;
Poor worms that crawl about in Heaven's face
Most disobediently to plague his eye.
We are not fit for Heaven or earth, forsooth,

D

While he's the dainty image of the world.—
This Joseph dreams that we are slaves to him:
Our Sire cries, " Well—ah well; it must be true,
For Joseph, whom I love of all my sons,
Hath found it in his sleep."

ISSACHAR.

He feeds too well,
He is too full of blood, too sleek and fair,
Whereof these fat and oily thoughts are bred;
We'll purge them off by letting forth his blood,
And, knowing that he loves to sleep and dream,
Forget the stop, and let him bleed to death.

REUBEN.

(*aside.*)

What shall I do alone among these curs?
To fight against them were to lose us both;
To weep were but to play a baby part,—
Excite their mirth, and move them to contempt?
Unless, indeed, each tear that I let fall
Would prove a knotty club (ah that it could).
Oh sure, my brothers, you are not so bad,
So bloody, so unnaturally giv'n,
To wish to paint your envy-chased cheeks
In the deep crimson that sustains the life
Of him, your Brother and your Father's son.

ISSACHAR.

You may try, Reuben, I will not be mov'd.
Your tongue's a pipe that unto this old tune

E'en playeth by itself: we're tired of't ;
(I marvel much that it was mute so long)
But sith we heed it not, why let it play.

REUBEN.

Oh Issachar and Brethren ! Do but think
How noble, now that you have got revenge
Close in your palms, 'twould be in you to say
(Turning sweet pity to your gentle hearts)
' Our brother wrongs us ; but the boy is young,
' And years will teach him how to honour us
' For our forbearance and superior pow'r.
' Our Father, too, whose grief will bruise his heart,
' Losing the flower that his eye did love,
' Shall we not think of him and spare his son ?
' He thought of us, and kept us in the way
' Of Industry, which leads to happiness ;
' And since but prattling children at his knees
' Up to this hour, save only in this thing
' Hath shar'd his pleasure and his hopes with us ;
' And with that stuff with which his bosom swells,
' Love and affection, hath beguil'd our days ;
' Making our path of life both plain and smooth.
' For his sake therefore we will spare his son ;
' For our's, that in the many years to come
' We may condemn remorse, and live at peace.'

ISSACHAR.

Double excitement plays upon my frame.—
Simeon, I'm famish'd with this air :
Shall we browse first on food, or on revenge ;

REUBEN.

Join one of you a gentle breath with mine :
You'll gain more happiness in Joseph's love
Than sullen joy in his destruction.

JUDAH.

Not I, indeed, I value not his love
At the poor siftings of our granary.

SIMEON.

Reuben, he doth condemn us of his birth :
For as the virtues and the evils oft
Descend from sire to son, so he doth take
A deep exception to our fellowship,
That was decreed him ere he was begot.
Rachel, the beautiful (as she was call'd)
Despis'd our mother Leah, for that she
Was tender-ey'd, lean-favour'd, and did lack
The pulpy ripeness swelling the white skin
To sleek proportions beautiful and round,
With wrinkled joints so fruitful to the eye.
All this is fair : and yet we know it true
That 'neath a pomane breast and snowy side

A heart of guile and falsehood may be hid,
As well as where the soil is deeper tinct'.—
So was it here with this same Rachel :
For the blue vein that play'd upon her brow ;
Her full dark eye; whose brightness silver'd through
The sable lashes soft as camel-hair ;
Her slanting head curv'd like the maiden moon
And hung with hair luxuriant as a vine
And blacker than a storm ; her ear turn'd like a shell ;
Her whisp'ring foot that carried all her weight,
Nor left its little pressure on the sand ;
Her lips as poisonous poppies, red and deep,
Gathering a dew from her escaping breath ;
Her voice so full and mellow, deep and clear,
That dwelt within the ear long after speech ;
Her neck o'ersoften'd like to unsunn'd curd,
Or fingers tap'ring to a rounded point ;
And the deep wrinkles of her veined hand,
Her dimpled knuckles answering to her chin,
Or teeth like honeycombs of the wild wilderness—
All these did tend to a bad proof in her.—
For armed thus in beauty she did steal
The eye of Jacob to her proper self,
Engross'd his time, and kept him by her side,
Casting on Leah hatred and neglect ;
Whereat great Heaven took our Mother's part

And struck young Rachel with a barrenness,
While she bore children : thus the matter went :
Till Rachel, feeling guilty of her fault,
Turn'd to some penitence, which Heaven heard,
And thus she bore this Joseph, who needs must,
And does inherit all the pride and scorn
Towards the children, that his mother did
Towards our Mother : —
Wherefore he suffers in our just rebuke.

REUBEN.

So : if they date their grief at thirty years,
And slur the very beauties of the dead
To prove some cause why they may hate enough ;
I may go prate unto a waterfall.
If they would change their pity for the gall
Of some wild tiger, I had better hopes
To touch their bosoms with compassion
By plaints and gentle words :
For when an evil deed is thus abroad,
The will predominant, the judgment blind ;
And he who seeks to lay it with advice,
Feeds and provokes it to a pride of power
Which nothing but superior pow'r can tame,
The will doth push itself quite by itself ;
And, full of madness, doth provoke to ire
By its own act ; to fret and carve its way

To all destruction. Mercy is but a spur
To goad on faster to its red design ;
And sense feeds on the senses. To tell them plain
Of what they are ; advise them of their vice,
Expose themselves unto their proper eye,
Were just, and yet not wise. It were, indeed,
By casting a contempt upon themselves,
To put them furiously to hate the truth ;
For Virtue never looks so ugly
Unto the eye of Vice (that's sick of good,)
As when it tempts it to rebuke itself,
And to respect the object of its scorn.—
'Tis here the villain doth put on his cap,
And plumes him proudly on his tyranny.
More virtue gets more passion ; and penitence
Sits all forlorn before the armed will,
Contempt and malice being accessory.
So this young boy's simplicity would be
A greater mark to tempt the 'venging knife
Than all the grief they boast. Bad passions, sure,
Like a prolific poison in the blood,
Do grow of their own nourishment so fast,
That all the man but lives unto the end
To which they point. Whence can the sweetness come
Of living to do vilely ? For the thing
We do ourselves, in others we should scorn ;

Yet in ourselves 'tis worshipp'd as a God
To whom we sacrifice. Alas ! it is
A way to me most crooked and unlearn'd.
Fear—Fear's the only thing to make them blench—
I would it thunder'd.

SIMEON.

The musing Reuben meditates some stop.

ISSACHAR.

Oh, let him muse—his most vexation
Is as a fly unto a lion's ear :
He will not buzz so loud to wake us up.

REUBEN.

Ye bearded men, with nervous, sinewy limbs !—
Ye demi-giants ! who from forging breasts
Toss through constrained nostrils splenetic winds !
Ye shepherds, and young herdsmen of the vale !—
Oh Jacob's sons and Joseph's brethren !
Have ye no fear ? Have ye no trembling,
Ye gluttonous butchers of this innocent lamb,
That star-blasts will not strike you ?
Or the spell'd quaking of the tremulous earth
Swallow you whole in its remorseless womb ?
Think ye those blooded hands will not draw slant
The storm-bolt in its fury, spite of prayers ?
Oh think, ye men condemn'd ! the hand of God
Is open, ample, merciful, and just,

And doth o'erburthen human love with good ;
But it is also valiant, great, and wise,
And with a rod of fire doth scourge those slaves
Who take the life of man, and play with blood.
Say that he spares you and he lets you live ;
Your days to come are rotten at the core :
Your memory would fear its exercise :
Ye would hate food, for it sustain'd your lives ;
And groan in heaviness, and weep and wail,
Till you should find some ditch wherein to die,
And end a forfeit life of slothful pain.
Oh, Issachar ! my brother, is it not
Better to stop and shun the punishment,
And live to love and honour thy own age,
And find a grave out through the joys of life ?
What think'st thou ?

ISSACHAR.

What !—Why I think my hand
Is stronger than your tongue.

REUBEN.

Your thoughts are like an egg, that's hard to hatch,
Part blood and vapour, and a callous mass.

SIMEON.

Our senses are tir'd of waiting on your tongue,
Nor are our passions in a state, I think,
To be charm'd with music. I love not nor fear your speech,

But think you fool, and weaker than a child
To suffer evils rather than to end them.

ISSACHAR.

A little sugar will not catch our wit :
A little fear will never scare our will.

SIMEON.

We will no longer think upon this deed.

ISSACHAR.

But do it.

REUBEN.

Will you stand in the lightning when 'tis done ?

ISSACHAR.

Let that appear——

(Enter Joseph.)

Here is the gentle youth——

Art thou not weary, Joseph, with thy walk ?

SIMEON.

Aye, is my brother ? Will he take my stool ?

ISSACHAR.

Why what brought thy good heart, my merry boy,
To search us out ? Surely you thought us sick
To have your company, being so long away.

LEVI.

How could our Father spare you from his sight ?
I marvel he should let you travel thus
Through long and dangerous tracks ; yet at your age
I was sent forth in spite of way and weather :

But you're more choice, are made of rarer stuff,
Fashion'd for some great end, and should be kept
With nicest care from dangers most remote.

JUDAH.

Though I embrace thee not, believe me, youth,
I'm glad you are amongst us—and alone.

ZEBULUN.

And so am I.

DAN.

Indeed 'tis kindly done,
To tempt fatigue, leaving thy smoking meat
To dip with us and eat of our cold fare ;
It argues love and condescension
In one who lives so fair and lies so soft
And hath such pampering dreams of his great worth,
To visit such dull herdsmen as ourselves
Who have but hardly common means to give ;
Unworthy one so nice and choicely bred,
Who needs must scorn our single-colour'd coats.

JOSEPH.

Whate'er you mean, I thank you, brethren.
Our sire commanded me to use my speed
To go and dine with him.

ISSACHAR.

I thought as much.

NAPHTALI.

And will you go?—that is—will fate permit?
 Did you ne'er dream that we have leave of fate
 To put his invisible mantle on our backs
 And use his wand and power?—In sooth, I'm glad,
 I'm very, very glad to see you here.

JOSEPH.

I am no judge of art; nor can I find
 Why you should use it to a boy like me:
 And yet your speech of love and tenderness
 Sounds hollow, and is gloss'd as 'twere with art.

ISSACHAR.

Are you sure of that? *(strikes him.)*

JOSEPH.

Oh cruel Issachar!—I will not weep.
 No, though my eyes burn up, I will not weep.

ISSACHAR.

You never dream'd of this.

SIMEON.

Alas! poor boy:

What shame and anger flush at once his cheek.

I needs must pity him; and yet I think

This side is livid and of sadder hue,

And shames its fellow. *(strikes him.)*

REUBEN.

(aside.)

Oh curs!—curs!—curs!

ZEBULUN.

Oh fie ! to let this rev'rend youth stand thus,
No taller than our girdles. Set him up
Upon the highest stool, that he may look
More than our equals, and more like himself.
In his next commerce with his heavenly guide,
Perchance he'll throw an idle word away
Tending to favour us.

LEVI.

In hopes whereof,
Being exalted thus, I bow my knee
Before thee—Prophet !

ZEBULUN.

Hail, Prophet !

DAN.

Hail !

NAPHTALI.

Hail !

SIMEON.

Here I have gather'd thee a crown of weeds ;
You may not stoop—I'll put it on thy head.

JOSEPH.

Oh mean and vicious ! Oh you savage men !

ISSACHAR.

Ho ! stop his mouth—Do not let him speak.

SIMEON.

(kneels.)

Sweet image! secret chosen at God's hand,
 Out of thy grace and wond'rous greatness hear,
 And hearing, grant a boon to one who kneels
 And almost kisses thy inspir'd foot.
 I pray thee let me live upon this earth,
 And breathe this air and nourish me with food;
 Which being granted, seeing 'tis not fit
 That one so mean as I should dwell and live
 Beneath the same roof with your holiness,
 Let me commend thy purity to heaven,
 The proper house for one so far divine;
 But sith you cannot enter there with life
 I will commit the act of love I owe,
 And fit you for your journey.

DAN.

How he holds

His stubborn courage swelling in his eye.

LEVI.

Now would he brain us if he could.

JUDAH.

See what a store of gall he had reserv'd
 To sauce his pride when he should come to pow'r.

ZEBULON.

He bandies scorn for scorn.

DAN.

We were all dead,
Did but his inspiration serve him.

NAPHTALI.

A slave!

LEVI.

A minion—a vicious minion!

JUDAH.

Ho! spoil his pretty coat.

ZEBULUN.

You dreamer!

JUDAH.

Boy!

ZEBULUN.

Call down your deity,—Where is your deity?

JUDAH.

Impudent boy!

DAN.

Presumptuous!

LEVI.

Disdainful!

NAPHTALI.

Proud to thy brethren!

ISSACHAR.

No more—down with him!

JOSEPH.

Great God! Ye will not murder me?

ISSACHAR.

Oh, no:

Ask our clubs.

SIMEON.

Strike!

REUBEN.

Hold! Hold! Hold!

SIMEON.

Keep Reuben back, or strike him down too.

LEVI.

Let loose the dogs on him.

ISSACHAR.

Be warn'd—be warn'd.

REUBEN.

Dear Issachar! one word—Sweet Simeon! but one—

If I exceed a minute in my speech

Knock out my brains—let me have that, I pray.—

I see when men are bent on shedding blood, (*aside.*)

Like a vast engine that hath many works

Turn'd by a master-wheel, they're forc'd to wrench

And chafe their courage to the highest pitch.

There's a prelusive pause that smells like fear

About this yeasty working to the act—

A sort of let that shuns its premises:
And so that they could wipe the stain away
They would be glad to find the object gone,
The breast reliev'd from its prodigious fraught,
And no blood sticking on them. What is the cause?—
What is the cause, my brain, and the preventive means?—
Quick—quick.—The will's a coward at heart;—
(Unless 'tis deaf and savage like a beast's,
Where feeling is the will sins on its knees)
—And lack of reason upon nature acting
Doth force a courage that is bold and false,
That gathers resolution in the dark,
Like to a violent giant who is blind.
Teach but the will, a way to act in full
Upon the object without shedding blood,
And reason then peeps in on prejudice;
And reason will not let man murder man.
Why then the coward shews himself, and puts
The secret knife into its sheath again;
Great conscience is task-master to the will,
And lets it forth as men hold bears in chains
To have them back, and whip them at the fault.
They would not care if he were snatch'd to heav'n,
And send no envy after.

ISSACHAR.

Come, Reuben, waste thy speech.

E

SIMEON.

And be not tedious.

REUBEN.

My brethren, you mistake : I do not plead
For Joseph's life : I have no such intent.
Your gen'ral judgment and your stronger power
Teach me much greater wisdom. This I would say :
It were a pity to shed Joseph's blood,
And put the crimson stain upon your hands,
When you have easier and safer means
To work your will on him and cause his death.
Close in the wood there is a delved pit
From which no man alive can make escape,
Being deep, and dark, and hollow on all sides :
Now since you seem to think the boy deserves
At all your hands a fatal punishment,
Suppose you cast him headlong in this hole,
And let him perish ; then chance and time must share
With you what blame there may be in the act ;
For hunger kills him, in this case, not you.

ISSACHAR.

What says Simeon ?

SIMEON.

It is a tempting pit.
I know it well, a panther lay there late—
A very tempting pit !

ISSACHAR.

Then be it so.

SIMEON.

He will have time to pray, and sleep, and dream,
And hear the howls of beasts, and think upon
The spiced mess at home.

LEVY.

I wish you joy
Of your good fortune since you rose this morn.

DAN.

Comfort go with you.

NAPHTALI.

Amen. Amen.

JOSEPH.

Issachar !—

ISSACHAR.

Silence !—Stop his tongue—away with him.

*(Exeunt Simeon, Zebulun, and
Naphtali bearing Joseph out.)*

REUBEN.

(aside.)

Thank heaven this goes well ; if my design
Hold out as firmly as it has begun,
I shall have purchas'd hatred of these men,
Have sav'd my brother for our Father's arms,
And spar'd him all that heavy weight of grief

That needs must hang about his Joseph's grave.

God's hand be with me still !

(Exit.)

ISSACHAR.

Come, let us spread the cloth and eat of bread :

Fetch the dried figs and grapes, cast the sharp seeds

From peel'd pomegranates ripe and red as fire,

To moisten our parch'd tongues. Appetite's in the air.

DAN.

Let us be glad and light of heart to day ;

Our enemy has failed in his craft,

And we at length are righted of our wrongs.—

Who kills the kid ?

LEVI.

That lot is Judah's,

While I go gather wood to make a fire.

JUDAH.

Listen there ! I thought I heard a bell :

And now again 'tis drifted with the air

That hurries to the left.

DAN.

What a sweet smell

Doth slumber on the bosom of the wind

As it heaves westward ; subtle and fresh it is,

As rich as flowers, and less sickly too,

Like ointment on an altar that is forc'd

By sacrificing fire ; and fit for heav'n
To stoop and breathe upon.

JUDAH.

The angels' hair
(My Father told me when I was a child,)
Is hung with dew much like the seedy pearls,
And of an essence rarer than the sweets
That the winds gather in high summer's tide ;
Surely one invisibly hath pass'd
And shook his dripping feathers o'er our heads ;
For nothing else could taste so fine as this.—

DAN.

Yonder's a storm of dust.
What cattle and what herdsmen may these be ?
Strangers are come ; and this fine perfume is
The herald of their progress, for it still
Flies on before. Lo ! from this bank I see
Swarthy Egyptians, yellow as their gold,
Tracking their way along the mountain's side
Riding on mules ; and like a gather'd cloud
Their mantles hang about them loose and free ;
While over head a round of plaited cane
Is held to intercept the burning sun ;
And the grey dogs, lolling their bleached tongues,
Slink 'neath the caravans, with travel griev'd.
Their camels all have bells about their necks,

Making a merry music as they go,
 Slow-footing 'neath a weight of packages,
 That nicely rais'd, like to square tow'rs shew.
 The dromedaries seem to sleep and walk,
 And move, as they could creep on thus for ever.
 Harness'd they are to waggons made of cane,
 (The light receptacle of rarities
 To grace the palace of some foreign king)
 Upon low wheels, bestain'd of either soil,
 Lightly sustain'd, secure of overthrow,
 Bearing a shifting sail upon the top
 That gathers pow'r from the propelling wind.

LEVI.

Which way do they turn?

DAN.

This: they will make this spot.

ISSACHAR.

They are the travelling merchants of the east
 That turn their gold and profit into goods,
 And wander thus to cities far remote
 Seeking to raise their fortunes on the wants,
 Or else desires of great citizens.

DAN.

Albeit a rich life, though dangerous.

LEVI.

That's not the best nor worst. Is it not brave

To behold strange people, join with many men
Of many countries, lodge in walled cities,
And mix in throngs and gather'd companies ;
See their rejoicings, customs, state and laws,
Their craftsmen, mode of labour and affairs ;
To hear their singing and their minstrelsy ;
To please the eye with habits of bright hue,
With sports, and shows, and public sacrifice,
Relics of ancient days, and men at arms,
And priests, and officers of high degree,
And to behold a king : this is somewhat ;
More when the profit of the journey pays
Your liberty and living in the land,
And sends you home more gilded with their gold
Than is the bee from rifling the sun-flower.
And yet, again, in all these journeyings
They dodge about between fell Danger's legs,
Who many times steps over them, and puts
His foot so near that they are shaken with it.—
E'en in their safety they have grievances ;
As, risk belonging to commodity ;
And storms, and weariness, and toilsome ways,
And choking dust, and dull monotonies,
And scarcity of rivers and of springs
Wherein they perish of a fev'rish death,
Unhous'd to th' elements, and fretted sore

By ever sickening for the journey's end,
Or ere it is begun. Trust me, indeed,
I'd rather be a herdsman in this vale
Than take the evil with the novelty.

ISSACHAR.

I do not think I would.

JUDAH.

A good thought this.—

Were it not better that these men should take
Our brother Joseph, sold into their hands,
And leave him bondman in some distant land?
Then do we 'scape at once his blood and death,
(Which surely will rebuke us, being his flesh)
And he doth take what fortune he may find.
Living so far from us, he is as dead,
And we are freed from his detested sight
Close as a grave could do it.

ISSACHAR.

It likes me well.

DAN.

It is a tempting chance to have him hence,
And saves the crime.

LEVI.

But let us keep his coat,
That we may dip it in a he-goat's blood,
And shock our Father's eye with the belief

That we have found it, and the boy is dead
Of violent beasts.

ISSACHAR.

Go to our brethren straight :
Say I entreat them to bring Joseph back :
And let them have full word of what we do.
(*Exeunt Levi and Judah.*)

(*Enter certain ISHMAELITES.*)

ISSACHAR.

Stand there, ho !

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

Strangers, what with us ?

ISSACHAR.

Whence come ye, and whither are ye bound ?

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

From Egypt we have been to Gilead
To gather dates and precious frankincense,
Pink cinnamon, and myrrh, and spicery,
And chests of fragrant medicinal balm
To work cool ointments for the grieved flesh,
And lull the pain of evils and of wounds ;
And now to Egypt go we back again
To profit of our toil. Such rarities
Are precious in old cities, and are priz'd

At sundry wedges of pure beaten gold,
That intercept us ere we reach the mart.

(*Enter SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, ZEBULUN, and NAPHTALI,
with JOSEPH.*)

SIMEON.

The boy has felt the bottom of the pit,
But we drew for him, and have brought him here.

JUDAH.

Come, will you purchase at our hands a slave ?
Of early youth, both fair and straight of limb,
Having alone a blemish of the mind,
A tow'ring spirit full of high disdain.

SECOND ISHMAELITE.

That is a fault.—Great spirit in a slave
Threatens a sleeping master. Egyptian whips
May mend this vice in him.

ISACHAR.

Look on him here.
The pith that gathers in his youthful bones,
In riper years will bear a burthen well.

LEVI.

First take his outer skin, his gaudy coat,
Which we may want to mind us of his loss,
And soak the tears up we shall shed for him.

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

I like him well. What barter wilt thou make ?

ISSACHAR.

How do you prize him ? At how many pieces ?

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

Wilt thou not rather take some woven cloth,
 Purple, or scarlet bright ; or bonnets trimm'd
 With fringe of green that veileth off the sun ?
 I have some arms and implements of war
 Well fitting to a nervous grasp like yours ;
 And ropes of pearls that sleep in bleached wool,
 And native jewels fast in lavender
 In a close cedar box of curious scent,
 And work'd with our Egyptian mysteries.
 Wilt thou not take some pearls or spices rich
 To steep your broth in fragrance, and endue
 Your palate's moisture with high-season'd meats ?
 Or here are garments of the camel's hair,
 The hides of bears, and various skins of beasts ;
 And broad Egyptian hats with eagle plumes ;
 Lances, and spears, and huntsman's garniture.

SIMEON.

These dry Egyptians are like all the rest.
 Strangers or natives man paints commodity
 As though he lov'd to give its virtues up ;
 Dazzling your fancy with a gay report

Till you shall die of longing all this while.
~~I have~~ but a shift to keep the money back
And save it in the pouch. Gold is the thing :
Get much of that, and you may pick your way,
And whistle your slaves about.

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

Why there it is : with coin I do command
The market and the profit that I use,
I can do any thing with that in hand ;
Without it I may starve upon my wit.—
Didst say thou would'st have coin ?

JUDAH.

Aye—Aye :

The goods you give us would have each a tongue
To tell a secret that must not be known.

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

Why, if thou wilt have coin, say fifteen pieces.

SIMEON.

Go to—you 'bate us : you deal too hardly.

FIRST ISHMAELITE.

Sooth it is square.

SIMEON.

Merchant, I say no.

The service of a fair and proper youth
Just in the flowery opening of the bud,
Would weigh against thy silver o'er again

In the school'd eye of some rich husbandman.
Remember that you purchase his whole life,
To bear your burthens e'en when grey and old.

SECOND ISHMAELITE.

Slaves swarm i' th' city : many men of bone
Barely exist by sweating through the day ;
And, but there is a beauty in his mien,
I would not meddle in't. Say twenty pieces.

SIMEON.

Well then, come count them out upon this stone ;
And take him off to serve thy countrymen.

SECOND ISHMAELITE.

These are true pieces bearing Pharaoh's mark.

SIMEON.

So—Now we're quit. Away—speed well and thrive.

JOSEPH.

O Simeon,
Into thy bosom I will run for help.
I am thy brother ; hate me ne'er so much,
But do not cast me forth to death and shame,
We may yet live to love and bless each other.

SIMEON.

Thy tongue has lost its charm.—Away—away !

JOSEPH.

O Issachar !
A trembling boy is shaken to thy foot,

E'en from the branch where he did cling for help,
Have pity on me : think when thou wert young
How 'twould have wrung thy heart to have been torn
From thy dear Father and thy brethren,
And given to strange masters of strange tents.
A little while, and I was yet a child,
And many a time have sat upon thy knee,
And many a time have kiss'd thy gentle cheek.
Thy name too was the first I learned to lisp ;
Canst thou forget these things, and do me scathe.
Do not strive with me that I touch your cloak :
There is no poison in these childish hands ;
I will embrace thy knees ; now we are like
To part, I feel I love thee, Issachar.

ISSACHAR.

Would'st creep into my bosom thro' my ears ;
Let go my knees. Ah ! snake—let go, I say ;
What, will you brag of power till the last ? (*strikes him.*)

JOSEPH.

Unhand me, Midianites, and let me go !
Those shrivell'd hands shall never bind these arms.
If it is profit that you seek in me,
My Father for my ransom will give more,
Yea, twenty times, than any stranger will
For my poor services : merchants, you err ;
(Oh ! you have sorely hurt me, Issachar,)

My brothers do but jest with you in this.
Behold, they are seven men ; dost thou believe
In all their seven hearts there is no drop
Of pity ? Observe each manly countenance
Work'd by the ruling hand of God divine ;
Say'st thou, are they not maps of dignity
Brimm'd with high feeling, full of love as power ;
Are not their bosoms quick, and therefore touch'd
With sweet affection for their fellow men.
Had I the inches I would punish you,
Daring to credit (though it doth appear)
That they are cruel and unnatural,
A sample of vile practice to all tribes.
This is not so, they are my brethren ;
I love them dearly e'en from first to last ;
I have offended them, at which I grieve,
And this my fright is meant my punishment :
It is no more, I do believe it is ;
Pry'thee think better of us Canaanites.

SIMEON.

You tardy merchants take him on with you,
We have no more of idle time to waste.

ISSACHAR.

We have your silver ; either bear him off,
Or we will take him to our wrath again.

ISHMAELITE.

Nay, I must have the profit of my coin.

JOSEPH.

Oh, deaf to mercy ! hard, hard hearts !
Nothing more cruel can you add to this.
Spirit of my Father, fill my pride ;
Spirit of God, descend unto my heart.
I will not grieve, I will not sue to stay,
So that your power never shall rejoice.
Behold, I smile. O Egypt ! yea, O world !
In thy vast bosom will I seek for love.
However bitter, and how hard my fate,
Still I gain something which is comfortable,
For I do leave more hatred, malice, wrath,
Amongst these brothers (which augments my shame)
Than ever I can find at strangers' hands.
Listen, ye men, how firm a voice I have,
" Commend me to my Father."
Forgive me, merchants, that I spoke you ill,
I am right proud to keep you company.
Surely my heart will burst.—
(*Exit Ishmaelites with Joseph.*)

SCENE.—*A Pit in the wilderness.*

(*Enter REUBEN.*)

Oh ! I rejoice so much I cannot call.
I see that dang'rous evils are more kind
Than our own brothers ; for this treach'rous gap
Form'd to betray men's footing, and to drown
Their fearful clamours in its caved womb,
Hath yet more tenderness to this young boy
Shaded in its dark and hideous breast,
Than in his brothers' hollow bosoms dwell,
With hearts of stone and pitiless revenge.—
What ho ! I say—Arise ! and cheer thee up.
I come to rifle thee from danger's arms,
Pale, and alarm'd ; to give the warm embrace,
And sun thee in thy father Jacob's love,
Where thou shalt flourish with a holy truth
That hatred cannot blemish.—Arise ! I say—
So you may smile on my affrighted love
That fruitfully did mourn for thee, like one
Who diggeth his own grave. But thou shalt live.
Thy crafty brothers have o'er-reach'd themselves ;
And with a bosom-full of zeal I come
To snatch thee quick from out this hollow tomb.—
What ho ! there—answer ho !—All still as death.
Surely they have stunn'd him with the fall :

A little chafing, bruised weeds, and balm
Will mend that evil and restore the sense.—
It is a cruel depth !—If his hurt be fatal,
Drop burning fire on these cursed slaves,
Take dreadful vengeance on their act, O God !—
And yet, methinks he cannot be much hurt ;
A fall like this would never kill a man,
Unless deserted 'specially of heaven.
The echo of my voice is answer'd by
A treach'rous silence that doth freeze my blood.—
How could they do it ?—A kind, a pretty boy ;
So soft of speech, so wooing in his ways,
So wise and holy, and with such a mien,
That, did the angels teach men exercise,
They could add nothing, or of mood or grace,
To that which nature has bestow'd on him :
Yet mothers say with a prophetic nod
They mostly lose these rarer jewels first.
If you do live, Oh speak ! or make some noise—
What ho ! there—ho !— *(He descends by a rope.)*

SCENE.—*A Vale at Dothan.* SIMEON, ISSACHAR, JUDAH,
&c. *sharing money.*

JUDAH.

Yonder comes Reuben : hide the silver up,
And let us keep our secret to ourselves.

(*Enter REUBEN.*)

REUBEN.

My gentle brothers, have you seen the boy
Since you did cast him down into the pit ?—
I pr'ythee tell me ; come, be plain and fair.

ISSACHAR.

What would you now ? We did desist our course,
And turn our justice round at your request ;
Still you would govern us in this affair,
And still you are displeas'd.

REUBEN.

You have not seen him, then ?

SIMEON.

No.

JUDAH.

How should we ?

REUBEN.

May the first thunderbolt that spurns the hand
Of the invisible archer of the clouds

Sink in amongst you ! And I would that now
A deaf'ning storm from either corner gather'd
Made havock o'er your heads !

SIMEON.

What—what is this ?

REUBEN.

Oh ye detested slaves ! Ye murderers !—
Blood—blood, ye dogs ! that is your precious food—
Nought less than the deep current of man's life
Can hiss your passions cool. Do you not fear
Lest you should grow proficient in your trade,
And murder men till men are scarce on earth,
That heav'n will cramp you with some sudden death ?

ISSACHAR.

The man is raving mad.

REUBEN.

Issachar, you are a villain.—

Aye, raise your clubs and tarr your angry dogs :
For dogs or devils I will never budge
Till I have eas'd the spirit of my grief
By telling you with curses what ye are—
Nay, Simeon, flourish not your threat'ning staff :
You are too mean for fear. I defy all.
Oh ! had I got you in a narrow pass,
So that a single coward at a time
Might use his wrath against my careless life,

I'd bring you low past kneeling.—Child-killers !
I do so hate you that I have a mind
To strike thy Issachar unto my foot.
Bustle, and shift your stands—I will be heard :
And he that stirs a foot, or moves his staff,
Though but to wave it doubtful of offence,
I'll mar his manhood with so sure a blow
Dealt as deadly as the eye of fate,
And after scuffle dang'rously with th' odds.
A giant well may fear a desperate man :
And ye do look so mean and impotent
That I should scorn myself for shunning you.

ISSACHAR.

I ne'er was brav'd before.

REUBEN.

That he who strives to justify his act
Shall die upon the spot, I say aloud ;
You are all villains.—Who answers, ho ?

SIMEON.

He dares and threats !

REUBEN.

Listen, ye snakes ! and hear yourselves proclaim'd.
The greatest of all villains is that man
Who doth debauch him in the greatest crime.
Theft and slander and ill-will are bad,
But they are virtues when compar'd with one

Which none but the gross villain doth commit—
'Tis called murder, and its act is this :—
By banishing all honour from its thought,
(Pity turn'd forth to wander in the blast,)
A heart as absent in the love of truth
As a cold stone within an iron chest,
It doth become so savage and deprav'd
That with a violent and wilful hand
The sleeping and the helpless it destroys.
But as all villainies do boast a head,
A measur'd standard of enormity,
So murder has, which still seems white and clear
Beside the fratricide's inhuman act.
'Tis treating heaven with a high contempt,
Who made man for its end, not for man's wrath ;
'Tis touching heav'n with a cruel thought
To cast its love back into its own face ;
Therefore you are a breed of cursed slaves—
A team of villains, guilty of man's blood ;
Hated of heav'n and to be shunn'd on earth.
Your names are curses, which henceforth I'll use
To vilify vile thoughts.

JUDAH.

Why, how is this ?

Young Joseph is not dead, but cast alive
Into the pit, which you yourself propos'd ;
And, for all I guess, is breathing at this hour.

REUBEN.

Ah where?—Ah where?—For I have sought for him :
The pit is empty, and he is destroy'd
By some fell danger ; helpless, and alone.

ISSACHAR.

Why then chance had a hand in his decease :
And as you told us when you urg'd the thing,
Then chance is guilty of his death, not we.

REUBEN.

I wooed you with a lie, which you believ'd
Knowing it was a lie ; and, like a knave,
Sweeten'd your shaken passion to content.
You are not wont to give your senses up
At any beck of mine : why did you then ?
Only to compromise your villainy,
You wish'd his death : however, it has come ;
And through your means it is, that he is dead—
Wherefore you're written down a murderer.

SIMEON.

And all this railing will not mend it now,
What we have done, is done.

REUBEN.

Ye callous brood !—Oh ! never pray again,
Nor cast your faces to the open heav'n ;
But stoop your bestial heads prone to the earth !
Clearness of seasons freshening our delights

Be to your senses but as marshy fogs !
The finer air to you be thick and damp !
And thou, proud Sun, oh ! temper not the winds ;
So they may blow them into flaws and blains,
For they have forfeited at nature's hands
Partition in her bounty and her love ;
Therefore their spirits being thus reprov'd,
Having offended nature's gentleness,
Shall die of comfortless and sad disease,
And rot upon themselves. 4

ISSACHAR,

This is very well.

REUBEN.

Take from their fruits and viands wholesome taste,
Which God doth send to nourish gen'rous man ;
That they may loathe to keep a life on foot
Sustain'd with such monotonous distaste.
And the deep relish of the wine they drink,
Oh ! flavour with their fault : then it will force
The sense to ache, and curl upon the lip
Worse than when poison, or a cup of balm
Wherein a speckled viper hath been steep'd
Meets both the gorge and eye.—Whene'er they sleep
Clothe them with heaviness ; and with mad dreams
Busily forge on the imagination,
That they may quake, and from their limbs distil

Those agonizing drops that horror breeds ;
For they most carelessly have put away
All claim upon thy mercy and thy faith,
And for a little passion, bartered
Thy most paternal love.—May they never
Laugh again !——

SIMEON.

Reuben, this is vain.

REUBEN.

Blight all their fortunes, and destroy their peace !—
A murrain be upon their cattle's lives,
Wether and lamb, that gather'd vultures may
Make house about their tents and in their sheds,
Gorging their food with eager discontent
While they shall sink and famish on the taint.—
Where'er their plough furrows th' embrowned slope
So rich and fruitful in its idleness.
Or dibble drills the pregnant moulded earth
Come wombless barrenness ; and all the seed
They shower in the promise of the spring,
By harvest-tide turn to as many stones ;
So may they never sheer the curled wool,
Nor give a heifer for a sacrifice—
So they never may enrich the eye
And scan the sober beauty of the corn ;
Where on that golden carpet roll'd around,

Walks mother Autumn on the rosy eyes
Coming to worship summer ere she fades,
And see her fiery clouds and mellow leaves
And fruits luxurious yielding from the stalk,
And taste of the blown fragrance of the air ;
And mount her throne of beautiful decay
O'erhung with flowers sicken'd of the sun,
Where she must faint on winter's icy hand.—
May all their labour an abortion prove,
And all their hopes sit brooding o'er their graves!—
So they may never smile in the green fields,
Sweet'ning their spirits at the combing bay ;
Nor grieve when mute and perpendicular
Dispungings of the hollow-bosom'd clouds
Gutter the fruitful surface of the earth :
Nor joy when temperance with silver wings
Sits pluming her bright feathers in the sky,
And eagles brood upon the thwarted oaks,
And larks and thrushes with deep, mellow throats
Rejoicing in the splendour of the scene
Make wanton in the echoes of the vale—
Oh ! never may the jocund harvest bell
(Inspiring all the spirits of our tribe)
Ring its sweet battery unto their ears,
Tuning the anthem voluble and loud,
Sacred to plenty for the garners full—

So they may wander with a doleful step,
In sullen sadness twin to heavy pain
Plucking a leaf of myrtle or of bay,
Not for the cap, but to tread under foot.—
Thus let them crave!—Bondsmen at strangers' stalls,
Where choking be their hire!—

JUDAH.

This is enough.

REUBEN.

Oh God! turn mercy to thy angel's hands!—
Young Joseph was not pitied in the storm,
Therefore no mercy yield!—

DAN.

We can bear more.

REUBEN.

The scribing angel as he wrote wept blood,
Tracing the highest vengeance to be wreck'd
On the chief criminal in God's reproof.—
Down with it to the earth, and part it 'twixt these brothers!

ISSACHAR.

Give him his way.

SIMEON.

Aye, let him take his round.

REUBEN.

Be still my sincere heart!—Oh give me peace!—
Tears and choler struggle in my throat

Like fire and water in contention mix'd ;
 And passion smoulders in my very heart.
 Oh ! I could weep that Joseph is no more
 Till marble should be furrow'd with my tears—
 Oh ! I could rave on your enormities
 Till words were wanting me to name thee plagues,
 Then like the forlorn image of despair
 Sit dumb and think past words.—Ye coward slaves !
 To prey on weakness and on helplessness.
 Ye infants yet unborn, Oh ! shun this crew,
 For all their manhood layeth in their spleen,
 Not in their mastership ; so they will tear
 Your innocent joints, and wink upon your blood.—
 Howl—howl, ye dogs, upon their villanies !
 Yet fawn in love as ye would lick the hand,
 Then mar it to the bones !—Strip the right hand
 Till the unveined sinews, like limp threads,
 Tease your inverted fangs ! It is the member vile
 With which the murd'rer works and feeds cold graves,
 Therefore destroy it !—My passion snuffs for blood !

ISSACHAR.

It is a madman's.

REUBEN.

Oh ! ye kites !

NAPHTALI.

What good

Can come of this ?

REUBEN.

No good can ever come
Within the limits of thy crimson sphere.
Thou hast sorely wounded good, and therefore good
Will tremble in thy presence like a flower
That's ruffian'd by the blast.—You're shunable :
And good will rather perish from the earth
Than lay its perfect and congenial hand
Upon thy unblessed head.

JUDAH.

I have a fear
He will betray us to our father's wrath.

REUBEN.

Have you a fear ? You were a better man
Ere you had work'd a cause to fear your friends.

SIMEON.

I fear his folly too.

REUBEN.

Banish it then.

If 'twere a spotted leprosy, 'twere yours
Even to rotting. But since your foul disgrace
Like to a canker-worm would gnaw the heart
With shame and anguish of your rev'rend sire ;
I'll keep the fiery secret to myself,
And leave your icy bosoms to promulge
Some subtle lie, which forg'd to his belief

Will raise a cunning ladder to his heart,
While he shall thank your griefs.—Oh perfect slaves!

JUDAH.

This is the best.

REUBEN.

Why do I not say so?

And does not my device hug your desire?
Yet for this stead you are so far beholden,
That I must ask a boon as some return.
Tell me, I pray you, whence comes your content,
Like a cold fountain through a pool of stone?
For I am sick to drink of such a stream.
What shall I do, and whither shall I go,
To ease my pain, and shun my father's face?
What well were deep enough to hold my grief?
What secret place would hide my anguish up?—
You who have help'd me to this hard estate,
Oh! help me to some comfort. The poor boy
(Whom I shall never more hear speak again)
Lies mutely shrouded in my weeping mind,
With all his innocent look. Old Jacob, too,
Sobs at the sight and groaneth in my ear,
And wrings his hands, and ravisheth his beard,
And takes no relish in his faltering prayers.—
Oh! give me back my peace, ye envious men!
And gather up the thorns that ye have cast

Upslanting in my path of life to come.—
Teach me some patience, or I shall go mad!—
Come forth, Despair, and fold me in thine arms!
Thou giant mandrake with the livid skin,
And ireful eye, and meagre, sinewy form!—
Come forth, and glare upon me, king of tombs!
A whirlwind singeth in thy scanty hair,
And rocks unfix them underneath thy hands,
And dungeon doors do jar upon thy ear;
At horrid shrieks a smile creeps o'er thy lips,
And howls of danger lull thee to repose.
Thou fascinating horror! steep me o'er
In thy fond madness; wooing eruptions,
Till with combustion all the bubble breaks,
Betraying the fool into his winding sheet
In horrible satisfaction and grim fear.
Thou iron wrestler! wrinkling fate's might,
Arouse thy boiling brain, and from thy bed
Of blasted rushes interknit with briar
Take thy pale lamp, that's fed of dead men's eyes,
And smile upon thy victim!—Hail, Despair!—
Off—off you patches! I'll rend you!—So—away!
I will come naked, or all cloth'd in grief—
These comfortable clothes are all too warm,
And hint at peace and honest days gone by,
And fled away, like flies in winter's blast.—

Alas! I use the speech of passion, and but fool
My graver senses that should be my guides—
I have no where to go!—

(Exit.)

LEVI.

Is this the may-born Reuben, whose low song
Ever beguil'd his hearers of some tears?—
Is this the gentle brother of our band,
The minstrel of all revels and all hymns,
The first to pity and the last to rave?
I never knew the compass of his voice,
Nor ever saw the fire of his eye
Until this hour: nor such a swoln display
Of words and actions never did I find
In any other man.

ZEBULUN.

I am amaz'd!

ISSACHAR.

I had a mind to beat him to the ground.

SIMEON.

I see, a man may hide the dragon in his mind
For twenty years in torpid solitude,
Like to an earthquake 'neath a flowery plain;
But when commotion (bred of some rough cause)
Plays on the secret spring of his command,
Then the great giant passion rears his arms,
And wakes to know himself. Like the milch kine

Whose cub is ravin'd by the nightly wolf,
This Reuben runneth lowing up and down
Devoid of reason, blatant at the moon,
With all his instinct in extremity.

LEVI.

The hand of nature swayeth in these things,
And Reuben answers her in her design.
He is a man who loves his injuries ;
Patience and meekness are his qualities,—
With such, their love is long and deep in growth,
(Like to the rooted spurs of some fair pine
That spreads its beauties by the river's side ;)
But when the storm is up, all meekness then
Doth lose its privilege, while judgment faints
And patience curdles into feased wrath.
They have no force to place against the force,
No temperance stretching into fortitude ;
But bind their hands unto their very grief :
Thus all their gentleness is set on fire,
Frighting its boasted guides of many years,
And madness triumphs in the overthrow.
There is no man so dangerous as he
Whose desperation doth contempt his fear :
Except it be the cunning or the wise.

DAN.

Nay waste no time in scanning his reproof :
We are the gainers, his the loss alone.

NAPHTALI.

One way we are reveng'd ; his grief is vain,
For that the boy still lives upon the earth.

JUDAH.

And all those curses he hath shed on us
Are blown to waste.

ISSACHAR.

Why let him go and puddle his clear days
With an ideal sorrow of the mind,——
His folly thus begets his punishment.

SIMEON.

And his loud anger woundeth but himself.

SCENE.—*Jacob's Tent.*

(*Enter to Jacob, REUBEN, LEVI, ZEBULUN, SIMON, ISSACHAR, JUDAH, NAPHTALI and DAN.*)

JACOB.

Smile, smile, my Reuben, I am glad at heart.—
Levi, and Zebulun, my boys, good even.—
My curled Simeon, and Issachar
With overwhelming brow, it is well done.—
Let me embrace thee, Judah, and Naphtali :—
My graceful boys, I say, it was well done,
(Fair befall thee, Dan) to keep my boy,
My merry Joseph, with you in the vale.—
Trust me I love ye for't, and did send him forth
That he might court your anger to this pass.
How like you this same Dothan? Well I trow.—
Ah! God is open-handed unto us!
Wherefore a grateful sacrifice we'll make
And offer with to-morrow's rising sun.
My gentle boys, I am so full of joy,
Finding your envy melted into love,
That I disdain my staff, and smile at age.
I us'd hard words and was a little mov'd
When last we parted: let it be forgot;
I ach'd to do it.—Where is Joseph now?

ISSACHAR.

I cannot guess !

JACOB.

Why, he was still the first
To run into my arms and clasp my knees.—
Ah 'tis some merry slight : you did expect
To find me thus in joy, and therefore have
Kept him without to work upon my love.
What, Joseph, there ! Thy sire is undeceiv'd.
Is it not true ?—I pr'ythee call him in.

SIMEON.

I would that he might hear.

JACOB.

No more, no more.

For surely I did send him to the vale
Commanding his return, but sith he stay'd
You must have kept him in your company,
For nothing less than proffer'd love of yours
Would tempt his disobedience to my will.
You see, good youths, I cannot be deceiv'd.—
Oh ! therefore call him forth. My joyful mood
Absorbs the very dulness of my age :—
Let us be glad this eve, rejoice and feast,
And with a frugal hand our spirits mellow
With generous wine.—No Joseph yet ?

SIMEON.

Oh sir!

I fear to check your spirit with a truth
That being heard would bring you to a crutch,
And turn your tears of joy to tears of blood.

JACOB.

Simeon, beware! you play upon my heart;
It is a fragile instrument, and old,
And hath been tun'd with love for many years
To thee and to thy brethren—therefore beware:
The strings are weak and yielding to the strain,
A little cracks them. You do push your jest
Beyond a proper feeling; yet I'm not
Or mov'd, or anger'd, seeing it is sport
Intended only to alarm my fear
And force my joy more perfect.

REUBEN.

(aside.)

How is this?—

Do our own virtues prove our traitors too?
Goodness invisibly beguiles a man,
And while the danger rocketh o'er his head
Enticeth him to play with faith and hope,
Already swallow'd in destruction's womb.
Thus Jacob fondleth with his misery
On promise of his joy, and is betray'd
E'en by the very purpose of his mind.

He holds himself as blind unto the truth
As if he knew and fear'd it. — Alas ! I do,
For he is old and shaken.

JACOB.

Will no one speak ? — A cruel silence this.
Oh take some pity of my weary age,
Nor let me die betwixt my hopes and fears.
Some evil hath been busy with my boy,
And sad foreboding in mysterious gloom
Creeps o'er my vital warmth. — Reuben shuns me,
And Judah weeps aloud. — Will no one speak ?

ISSACHAR.

Oh ! would my tongue had never known its use,
Or else had lost its office ere this hour !

REUBEN.

(*aside.*)

I would it had.

ISSACHAR.

For in my thought dumbness is virtuous
When speech must utter such a dismal tale.

JACOB.

Yet speak not. Issachar, each word you breathe
Doth wound my bosom like an adder's sting.
The prelude to thy speech grieves me so sore,
Thy speech will drive me mad.
Tell me some other in a kindlier strain,
How long I am to live. This Issachar,

Though my own son, would slay me with his speech.
Surely my boy is wounded by some chance ;
Nursing and watchfulness may bring all well :
And I am old and only fit to nurse,
And could be vigilant in such a case.
Thy love for me doth make thee dread the worst :
I pray thee entertain a cheerfulness.
All evils have some remedy, we know ;
This is not very great—it cannot be.

SIMEON.

You cheat yourself, and teaze your malady ;
Seeking yet shunning what you fain would know.
Now call your hidden fortitude around,
Arouse your courage, govern your despair ;
And with a bravery fortify your ears,
That what I utter may not burn the sense
Nor sear thee to the brains.

JACOB.

Hold !—Mercy, pray—

Oh Simeon ! you would say my boy is dead ;
Or wherefore such a preparation ?
Yet, Simeon, do not if you would be lov'd
Or dearly honour'd in thy life to come—
If thou would'st have thy children dutiful,
Oh ! do not slay thy father.—Issachar,
I turn to thee : thy voice sounded but now

Like to the dismal hollow of a grave
That gapeth for man's issue; but since then
Simeon hath wail'd his notes into my ear
And turn'd thine into music.—Do thou speak.

ISSACHAR.

Alas ! dread sir, I know not what to do.
The story I must tell is all too sad,
And you have cursed the proclaiming tongue.
We that do know the act, did not the act,
And therefore have not earned thy rebuke.

REUBEN.

(aside.)

Oh nature, nature.

JACOB.

Whatever is to come, one thing I know—
You do not feel for Joseph or thy sire,
As both in nature and in duty bound ;
Else you would be too full of grief yourselves
To scan my wild replies. The weight is yours :
And having tied me to my reason fast,
Come, cast it on—down with't upon my head ;
And, though it sink me, yet still pile it on.—
Yet I am not so weak, but, like myself,
Or like a mount I'll over-brow thy words,
And view their fall in the abyss below
While I am rear'd triumphant. I will not
Betray my manhood to a secret tale,

Nor shake at words of thine. I do demand
To have the inmost knowledge of this thing.—
Oh! say the truth—yet say not he is dead.

ISSACHAR.

The boy of all my brothers you so lov'd,
Who slumber'd in your best affections,
And was the star of all your rare delights,
O'ershadowing me, with all your other sons,—
Your Joseph, whose deserts did win that place,
The highest and most worth to be enjoy'd,
And fill it to your measureless content—
Who did forgive us all our envious guile,
Was blind unto our faults, and rose the higher
In thy discerning mind, for that he pleaded
For our forgiveness when you pleas'd to frown—
E'en he is surely dead.

JACOB.

Well, you see I'm firm :—
Though somewhat old, yet I can bear a rub.

SIMEON.

There is no hope but what he says is true.
Look on this mantle, soaked in his blood,
We found it by the way. *(Jacob falls.)*

LEVI.

You were too sudden in the shewing it.

ISSACHAR.

He only faints. Quick, let us bear him up.

REUBEN.

Stand off, I say.—This is a pretty pass—
To bring your father swooning at your feet,
About a murder, too :—this is well done.

ISSACHAR.

You shall not shame us, Reuben, though you try.

REUBEN.

You're sunk past shame into a deep contempt.
I will not answer thee, thou man of stone.

JUDAH.

Nay, Reuben, let us lift him to a chair :
And smother not your wisdom in rebukes.

REUBEN.

'Tis better as it is. His pulse still beats,
Though with a motion dangerously at ebb :
If you do raise him, you but stop the flow
That his prostration sanctions : therefore, let be.—
What eyes but yours could bear a sight like this,
And not be blasted by the glowing brand
Of physical remorse, that fears to look
Behind, chain'd fast to what it scorns. And yet,
Half devil and half angel as it is—
Or rather angel in an ugly house—

I would entreat you all to lose no time,
But entertain the purifying guest
Who teaches us to loathe our infamy :
For though its strong hand governeth a whip,
Wrung from the sinews of murd'ers' right arms,
The other tilteth o'er a cup of balm,
That, coolly soothing, floweth through the wounds
As fast as they are struck. The callous slave,
Untouch'd with Heaven's mercy at his crimes,
Is but a counterfeit, (no man of flesh),
Having a human impress, being as dead
As the dull earth of which he first was form'd.

ISSACHAR.

When I do know that I have done a thing
Deserving of remorse, I'll entertain it.
Our brother did usurp our privilege,
And practise on our quiet and estate ;
Wherefore we have put him on one side,
Into that place which he has fairly earned.
He marr'd our peace ; being but one to six :
Wherefore our justice hath been square with him.

REUBEN.

See how his eyes do flood with teeming tears ;
His grief on nature acting past his sense.
And struck beyond all joy in days to come :
Foredoom'd to groan, and trace his heavy loss

Within the tempting records of the past.—
What can we now but go and dig his grave?
Which in my sense, is charitable far
Beyond a world like this.

ISSACHAR.

I am not bound
To yield in sorrow at this load of woe;
For it is selfish, and is paid to one
Not more deserving, and of fewer years
Than I and my wrong'd brothers. Were we dead,
A very little portion of this dole
Would fall to waste on us.

JUDAH.

Peace, Issachar,
And do not wrangle o'er our father thus.
It may be, he may never rise again,
For he is sorely wounded at this thing.

REUBEN.

Oh! I did think my sorrow was so huge,
That not a corner was unfilled by it;
But, Judah, thou hast touched me e'en to tears;
For the first word of kindness and concern
Has issued from thy lips. If I can ere
Forget the cause why I should live to hate—
I'll love thee first.—Oh taste the milk, my friends,
Flowing from weeping Mercy's tender breast,

And lay your gall, that you may learn to soothe
The deep disquiet of your father's days.
The rev'rend image laying at your feet,
Weak as a child, and hinting at a grave,
Does love you more than you can ever think.
Those soiled lips that breathe upon the dust,
Blessing thy tranquil sleep, have often laid
Their wanton kisses on your baby brows:
Those arms, spread out like branches of a tree
Fell'd for its barrenness, have ever strain'd
Your bosoms unto his: that strayed beard,
White as the robe of pity, (goodly sight!)
Gathers obedience from every eye,
And does impart benignity to all;—
While, above all, those rev'rend hands supine,
Under the smiles of heaven, have still laid
Their prosp'rous blessings on your bowed heads;
Therefore I pray you, even for your love,
Since that we cannot wholly patch his grief,
Yet to attend it with devoted eye,
And minister affection as we may.

JUDAH.

You us'd no ceremony, Simeon,
And did affright him with the blunt display
Of that bestained coat. When he recovers,
Use all the gentle language that you can.

REUBEN.

He doth breathe hard, and twitches at his brows ;
A fev'rish dew upon his temples beads,
And nature struggles into action.—
Place the cushion gently 'neath his head—
So—raise him tenderly—he doth revive—
Nay, Issachar, no art ; we three can do it.
How is it, Sir ? Look on thy comforters.

JACOB.

My brain is all commotion.—How is this ?
Send Joseph to me.

REUBEN.

Silence!—Do not speak.
His wits are dash'd a little from their sphere.

JACOB.

A mystery's upon me ; but my grief
Opens a door that letteth in the light.—
Oh ! cruel reason, if thou wilt return,
For charity drive mem'ry from thy train!—
What will become of me?—wretched and old!—

LEVI.

Be patient, Sir, and temper your lament.

JACOB.

Where's Simeon, I say ? But now he stood
Like a gruff herald at a city gate,
Waving a bloody flag against its peace,

Sure sign of carnage and of massacre.
Let him stand forth; and once more blast my sight
With the ensanguin'd garment of my boy—
How sad a sight to grieve a father's eye;
Worse than his dying blood from his own veins.—
Can I still see?—Will nothing strike me blind?
A sense so precious surely should not live
After a sight so rude; but since it does,
I'll keep it ever as a weeping cloud,
To wash this garment of its ugly stain,
Until it shall become as white and pure
As mountain snow, or wool imbued in milk.—
Ah! meagre recompence!—Oh! sorry shift!—
To fill the monstrous gap in my content.

SIMEON.

Be patient, Sir.

JACOB.

Sir, I will not be so.

I was all patience when my boy did live,
Was all content, and silence, and repose;
And shall I be the same now he is dead?
Bless dull monotony, tongue-tie my grief,
And feel no sorrow for my doleful loss,
And smile upon old customs and affairs?—
Oh! I do loathe all habits that are pass'd,
All hours, and times, and practices of life;

And do more love the blood upon this cloth,
Than worlds of patience.—What should I do
With a heart so tough?—

REUBEN.

A little think on God.

JACOB.

Why, Reuben, so I do ;
Man's grief is greater than man's reverence :
By and by I'll wipe off this extremity,
And pray forgiveness that I am so rude
To rave upon the treasure I have lost,
Patience sits brooding yonder in the sky ;
I cannot reach it with this feeble arm :
Let it descend, oh ! heaven, on my head,
For it doth burn as it would singe these locks
That count my years of service.

JUDAH.

Still this death

Does ever cheat us of our dearer friends :
Or either we must fade into his gloom,
Or tamely see them gather'd up before.
The end of all our days is but to die.
Our life's a blank, 'twixt two oblivions spent :
A curious complex action upon time.
Since God and nature do demand so much,
Why let us not rebel in our complaint,

But yield to what in wisdom is decreed.
Had Joseph liv'd to look upon our graves,
That grief were his which now we spend for him,
And still he must have follow'd to the tomb ;—
Therefore, by hurrying so far before,
He loses but so many days of life,
Which at the best is but fantastical,
And doth escape the monstrous sorrow which
Would wait on our decay.

JACOB.

I am so sore,
That every good which tends to comfort me
Doth make me wince and shrink upon the pain,
Like rubs upon the rawness of the flesh.—
Why, what's all this unto my Joseph's face ?—
His voice, which I shall never hear again,
That through my ear did steal unto my heart,
And stir it to the object of his speech ?—
His sober eye tending to gen'rous smiles,
Where I have seen the figure of my face
Imag'd as in his mother Rachel's—
His youthful virtue and affection ?—
His tenderness and yearning unto me ?—
I am a father moaning a dear son,—
Oh ! never, never to return again
To bless my sight or soothe my dying hour.—

H

Mourn ye, therefore ; for you have lost a youth
Who would have been the honour of your tribe,
And was enthroned in your father's heart.

LEVI.

What can we do to moderate your pain ?
The tyrant Sorrow spurns us and our cares,
And still will run his round.

JACOB.

You cannot tell

The kind of sorrow I am doom'd to bear.
No son did ever grieve for a dead sire
As fathers do at losing a lov'd child ;
Their sympathy is youthful, like their age,
And jointly form'd of love and duty mix'd.
Honour, respect, obedience sways their minds,
O'ertopp'd by filial affection ;—
But ours are ungovern'd qualities,
Liberal and unctious as the dew from heaven ;
As instinct, hope, and fear, and boundless love,
Far-sighted watchfulness, and wakeful care ;
And fearful soundings in this dragon world,
To find them easy footings to their graves ;
And herald thoughts, sent winged with desire,
To bustle for their comfort and repose—
This is the service of our dainty love :—
While they grow up in wilfulness and ease,

Not noting all the workings of our hearts ;
Resting like stripling branches on our stem,
Free from the wind, and shelter'd from the storm.
I never heard of any father's son
Who griev'd himself into his father's tomb ;
But well I know, and clearly do I feel,
That a dead son preys on a father's life.
It is a law balanc'd by Nature's hand,
Docile to reason, bred of circumstance.—
Youth, like a jocund wand'rer, starteth forth
To take his vent'rous journey in the world,
And ever as he goes he culls those joys
And pleasures growing in his onward path,
(Not dull'd by insipidity and use),
Keeping fast hold upon the clue of hope ;
The music in the future that he hears
Restrains his backward gaze, where all mischance
Is shook unwelcome to his memory.
But when grave Time show'rs from his shaking hand
The snow of age, o'ersilvering the crown,
Mingled with notions of eternity,
Then taketh he his stand upon the hill,
Viewing his downward journey, that doth stretch
Into oblivion, through the vale of tombs ;
Gathers his mantle o'er his thoughtful brows,

O'er-reading all the way that he has pass'd,
And loves the world (like an old parting friend)
As feeling he must fade from his abode ;
And calls the circle of his comforts round,
Counting them over with a jealous eye ;
And maketh much of them, and still doth cling
The faster as he steps upon his grave,
Hopeful of heav'n, yet tenable of earth.
Then think what vivid sorrow I must feel,
Whose strength has failed in the stress of days,
To have my child thus ravish'd from my breast,
Whom I have look'd upon so many years,
Who was my flesh, and did inherit all
The grace there is in me, crown'd with his own.
I thought to leave my image on the earth,
Fairly o'erflourish'd in my goodly boy,
And therein to re-live my date of life,
And teach his fellows that old Jacob still
Was honour'd, by reflection, in the land ;—
But he is dead, and I am left to mourn,
And tire on panged recollection.—
Ah ! do you weep, my boys ?— You have good cause.

JUDAH.

These words of yours do touch us very near.—
Father, perchance young Joseph is not slain,

But being beset by beasts, did shed his coat,
And flee away alive,
And is miscarried in some unknown place.

JACOB.

Sorrow is all that I have left me now—
Oh! cheat me not of that!—The boy is dead.—
It is, perchance, that I am in a dream,
It is, perchance, I did not make this coat,
But not perchance, that he is never slain.

JUDAH.

'Tis hard to say what is become of him.

JACOB.

That I can tell, triumphant o'er my woe:
He is a spirit, purified from taint,
Catching a glory from the court of heav'n,
And brighten'd o'er by an angelic light,
Shot from the dread magnificence within.
He tends the threshold of the mighty gate,
Amid a host of winged messengers; where
Angels adoring catch the whisperings
Of the unearthly and mysterious hymn,
Tending to glorify the name of God,
And sweeping round his throne.—Oh! were I not
His father or his kin, I should rejoice
In his high exaltation. Yet, alas!
I am but flesh, therefore my feeling will

Still war against my judgment and my sense.
Better serve God in heaven than on earth:—
Yet I do envy heaven of my boy,
And crave to have him here about my side,
Though he were taken from the blissful sky:—
Carry me in, for I am very weak,
And let there be no noise.

(Exit.)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II.

CHORUS.

SUDDEN authority in those inured
To forcing of offensive offices
On men, in stubbornness and discontent,
Begets a churlish spirit; like to his
Who tames a bear with hunger and with blows,
Turning his nature to his purposes.
Treatment like this young Joseph did receive
At the Egyptians' mercenary hands;
Who in their power did indulge themselves
In bitter threats, in grudgings and contempt.
These things do little where the greater are;
For Joseph was departed from himself
Like one who sleeps and dreameth of events;
Or with imagination fondleth
In pain and passion on a former joy:
And as he journeyed still he turned his face
Towards bright Canaan and its misty hills;
And as the ev'ning time of folding came,
Of morning prayer and brotherly repast,

His eyes did pierce to Heaven thro' his tears ;
And all his features struggled with sharp pain
To wear obedience to the will of God,
And overtop his sorrow in content.
So selfish was he in this heartfelt grief,
And so resolved to be obedient
In all mischance that should befall to him,
(Seeing he had sought favour at His hand
Who cannot know us without patience)
That he still bore a cheerful countenance
In all his drudgery and offices ;
Turning rough speeches with a gentle look,
 wooing respect by execution ;
And by forbearance, and a temperate tongue
Stealing from out the bosoms of these men
The sting of anger and the fang of wrath.
So as their journey did decrease in leagues
Their favour and their love did cleave to him.—
At length they left the forest and the hill,
The wholesome green ; and on the barren sands
Crept on their burning way, where man ne'er comes,
Save the marauder sweeping o'er the plain,
Upon a palfrey fleeter than the wind,
Fearful of officers and men at arms—
Like as the Ostrich watchful from afar
Measures his flight ; and aids him with his wings

Screaming towards the desert hard pursued,
Urged by the Horsemen's javelin and bow
Who seek his rolling feathers for their pride :
So flies the bandit, cowed by his fears,
Bearing large skins of wine from the city gates
To his companions in the wilderness,
Whose parched lips do curse his long delay ;
With faces freckled black by the proud sun,
And hands that hunt the lion and the man.
They cleanse their scimitars of stained blood
And hang their scalding armour on the boughs,
Midway within a rugged precipice
Browing the raving cataract beneath,
While over head the grey clouds sail in light
Like droved camels dreaming in the sun.
Long time their wheels indent the weary miles,
And many signs and landmarks still remain
To cheer their sick'ning courage and fatigue ;
And oftentimes they scare the wary mule
And gathered vultures, (sign of carrion).
Gorging on that the bear and wolf have left,
Greeting disturbance with a deafening cry ;
Sailing warily to distant strands
And stand and safely watch the slow retreat ;
And where a barren rock doth forked rise,
Old eagles perched, unwearied of the sun,

With dreamy eyes accepting his regard
As tho' his dazzling fire but lulled their pride :
Meanwhile the young ones in the gushing spring
Which providence has wisely planted there,
Mapping its way upon the level sand,
Bathe their young pinions grey.
Upon the drougthy sands doth silence dwell—
And wandering winds are lost in loneliness—
Sweeping its level surface without end ;—
Like to a drove of wolves who miss the track,
And wind a circle and shoot forth again,
Perplexed in a maze monotonous ;
Howling their savage discord at the moon.
The fiery heat doth beat against the ground
In a waste of light reflective ; no herbage green,
Or tree, or shrub chequers the tedious blank :
Like a dull stain cursed o'er with barrenness
Seared in the angry glances of the sun.—
Anon they come unto the oozy Nile,
Where the sweet wind doth dally with the sedge,
Peopled with insects small of varied dies ;
Where the secretive sun conception forces
Into the *ebed* bottom, that engluts
The fattening grain ; so that pale fear almost
Possesseth watchful famine of his being.
River of speckled snakes and adders blue,

And thriving birds that forage in the slime
To nourish nestlings beyond the plain,
Tiring the wing towards the wilderness :—
Of armed crocodiles, whose scales defy
Sol's penetrative beams ; in slothful ease
Slumbering upon the bosom of the stream ;
And as a cloud drifts to the tide of air,
So they in shapeable course obey the flood.
There the twin alligator in rushy mew
Doth snare the supple weazle to his jaws,
Scenting the mangled carrion in his throat,—
And the golden snake out-rooted like a cloud
At sun set, when the umber sand gleams red,
Teazes the restless spirit of a hawk
Who hath descended on his craven food,
And with his ardent eye by fear illumed,
And blacker in its lustre than a swan's,
Charmeth his object with his dazzling gaze,
Fencing his shifts as valour doth contend
With certain fear, fatally seizing on his faint regard
Until the victim yields to nature's law :
The valiant prisoner with the yellow spurs
Drops from his prey is preyed upon in turn.
Lo ! where they cross and leave the unctious Nile
Lazy Egyptians in the outer fields
Scatter the grain in swollen idleness,

And yonder towers and turrets that arise
Is parched Egypt's city, rude and old.
The Egyptian shouted and to Joseph spake :
" Since I do find you worthy of your hire,
" Courteous and willing in your servitude ;
" Withal endued with a fair knowledge, far
" Beyond your young experience and your years ;
" I shall dispose you to some officer,
" Some man of state and good ability ;
" Whereby the comfort of your life to come
" Will be increased by trust and fair regard,
" E'en as you rise in favour with your lord :
" And I shall gain a profit better worth
" Than did I sell you at the common mart
" For common hire."—Young Joseph but replied
" God's will be done."—To an Egyptian lord,
Potiphar, the captain of the guard
Of Pharaoh king of Egypt—unto him
Was Joseph sold a bondsman to his will.
But Potiphar (a man of gentle blood,)
Seeing young Joseph's merit put him straight
Into some trust, and by degrees increased
His favour and regard (following desert,)
That Joseph lived in honourable bonds,
The steward of his household and affairs.
Meanwhile his grieved father mourned his loss
As tho' he had been dead and pack'd in earth.

SCENE.—*Potiphar's House.*

POTIPHAR and JOSEPH.

POTIPHAR.

Wear this gold chain.

JOSEPH.

You honour me, my lord.

POTIPHAR.

Young man, my pride is lesser than my truth,
And fair desert should be respected well,
But most of all when native in a slave.
This chain I give thee, not to pay thy worth,
Only to honour it; for I have found
Since thou hast had mine office in thine hand,
Thy government has brought me more respect,
More honour and renown, than ever yet
Did wait upon mine own: hence I know
Thy God is with thee, that thy office thrives,
And I am made partaker of the good;
Wherefore I love and honour thee as much
As wert thou born my brother. Thy duty
Has been to me as great as ever child's
Was to its father:—Faith it is strange—
It seems man's pleasure is allied to tears,
For my eyes burn to talk upon thy love,
As tho' I did not leave thee here in trust
But were about to quit thee without date.

JOSEPH.

My most just lord !

POTIPHAR.

The king doth send me on an embassy ;
Yet I go not while you remain behind ;
Therefore the offices and trusts I leave
Sleep in my ear as things already done.
Use my house freely, tend my ladies will :
You'll find obedience in my trusty slaves,
Therefore command thy pleasures. Thou hast earned
A fair and honoured fellowship with me,
Wherein I gain : so fare thee well, and peace
Be with thee. (*Exit.*)

JOSEPH.

Amen : the same to thee.—

How have I earned a happiness like this ?
Patience, great God, was all my quality ;
You have rewarded me beyond my worth.—
Ah ! 'tis the way of bounteous providence
With those whose stubbornness doth cede to peace :
And he who bears repeated trials well,
With gentle and rebukeless temperance ;
Under the angel's wing doth take his stand ;
And for his faith and human fortitude
Meets his reward on earth.—Oh ! patience,
I never will forsake thee, though this joy
Were turned into a moan—protect me still. (*Exit.*)

SCENE.—*A Chamber in Potiphar's house.*

(*Enter PHRAXANOR and JOSEPH.*)

PHRAXANOR.

Ha—ha—ha!—

I check in my laughter; dost thou notice it?

Canst thou tell why?

JOSEPH.

Madam, not distinctly.

PHRAXANOR.

Were you to guess on the left side of me

You'd wake the knowledge.

JOSEPH.

How so?—I do not see.

PHRAXANOR.

Because my heart doth grow on the left side.—

A grieved spirit oft beguiles itself

With laughter and affected idleness;

But all this while a perilous weight will hang

About the breast, threat'ning its boasted peace;

And, like Time's finger on the dial's hand,

Will stop it at the hour.—Ah, me!—alas!

My mirth was of my head, not of my heart,

And mock'd my patience.

JOSEPH.

I am sorry for it.

PHRAXANOR.

No physician e'er did heal a wound
By grieving at the hurt. Yet a white hand,
O'spread by the tendril veins of youth,
Hath quieted a lady's gentle side,
And taught her how to laugh.

JOSEPH.

Madam, indeed

A simple thing that's fair and honourable
Doth match my understanding and my wit.
A perplex'd riddle I could never learn ;
And am amaz'd at your astrologers,
Who fancy they foretel the act of Fate,
By virtue of their gravity and beards ;
With pond'ring eye still searching in a cloud ;
And consecrated wand of ebon wood
Still groping for the jewel in the straw.

PHRAXANOR.

Oh ! wise on the wrong side. If you would learn
Strange matters, never choose a woman's tongue ;
For I perceive you still do swerve aside
From tutoring of their's.

JOSEPH.

Would I could catch

The motive of your words. My duty bids
To answer you becoming my estate.

PHRAXANOR.

You might be pleas'd to catch it from my eyes—
Do they look anger'd?

JOSEPH.

Gentle, to a fault.

PHRAXANOR.

I am glad of it.—I have passions, Sir ;
And did I catch them pregnant with a spleen ;
Fiery, or bloodshot, when I would command
Their lustre to be tempting with encouragement,
To any friend that's dear unto my breast,
I'd pluck them out.

JOSEPH.

Madam ?

PHRAXANOR.

They are fair eyes—

I know they are. For I have often paus'd
At eve of sinking to the silken bath
With maiden admiration at their pow'r
Reflected in the water like twin stars,
Your's bear upon their colour.

JOSEPH.

Madam, you did

Command me to your presence, and I pray

If you have cause for my attendance here
Yet make it known unto thy servant's ear.
I've learn'd of my Lord's kindness the respect
Due to your honourable service, and
Though he is far distant from his home,
His heart remains with me and my good trust.

PHRAXANOR.

Silence!—

JOSEPH.

Madam, I am obedient.

PHRAXANOR.

Thou dwell'dst at Canaan, said'st thou?

JOSEPH.

Madam, I did.

PHRAXANOR.

What kind of air is 't there?

JOSEPH.

Congenial.

PHRAXANOR.

Indeed?—I've generally heard that men
Are favour'd of the climate where they live.
Bethink thee—surely our hot Egypt has
Swolten thy recollection of the place.
Thou'rt like a man that's nurtur'd upon ice,
Fed with a spungy snow, and rear'd upon
A mountain's top where winds do freeze the air.—

Congenial, said'st thou?—There's no drop that's warm
Coursing another round those purple veins.—
Let me touch your hand—it is a cold—
I've Egypt's sun in mine.

JOSEPH.

Pure fire indeed.

You do mistake ; my hand is not so cold ;
Though I confess I've known it warmer far
For I have struggled against heated blood,
And am proficient in forbearances.
A dishonest thought
Masters my passion, yea in any mood.

PHRAXANOR.

Indeed ! are women's wits, then, merely dust
Blown by a puff of resolution
Into their doting eyes ?

JOSEPH.

Wit is but air.

For dust the queen becomes ; if she be good
She breaks to gold and diamond dust, past worth,
The proper metal of a perfect star :
If not, embalming will not cure it.

PHRAXANOR.

Come, Joseph, how you play upon my words—
Nay leave this wrangling—thy small mouth in sooth
Was made for sweeter talk. Nay throw aside

The pond'rous mask of gravity you wear,
Or give it me, and I will cast it forth
To where my husband governs his affairs ;
It will not reach him, nor be recognis'd
More than if he were blind.—Come here, I say—
Come here.

JOSEPH.

What would you, Madam ? I attend.

PHRAXANOR.

Why, put your fingers on my burning brow
That you have stirr'd into this quenchable heat,
And touch the mischief that your eye has made—
Do it, I say, or I will raise the house—
Why that is good. Now I will never say
A sudden word to startle thee again,
But use the gentlest breath a woman has.—
You may remove your hand—yet stay—
I did not say withdraw it—you mistake :—
You are too jealous of the wond'rous trifle ;
Leave it with me and I will give you mine.
I hold it as a bird that I do love
Yet fear to lose.—Fie on that steward's ring—
Now should it slip, it will fall in my neck.

JOSEPH.

My lord did order, ere he left the house,
That certain merchants should be furnish'd forth

Of the king's stores, and of his proper trust :
They do attend me, and I must not let
The keys rust idly at the steward's side.
To honourable employment I am bound,
By duteous love, unto your lord and mine ;
And this is honourable, therefore I take my leave. (*Exit.*)

PHRAXANOR.

Now should I be reveng'd of my own face,
And with my nails dig all this beauty out,
And pit it into honeycombs.—Yet, no :
I will enjoy the air, feed daintily,
Be bountiful in smiles, and grace my charms,
As the blown rose is beautified by leaves,
Which else shews barely 'mongst the barren twigs :
For he who will not stoop him for desire,
Strides o'er that pity which is short of death,
To be pitied where I would fain be lov'd !—
Go to—I rather would be scorn'd outright,
Nor lose myself in looking for my loss.
The spring is full of flowers where to choose ;
And independence is the art of love,
As giving no temptation unto pow'r,
Which in the untouch'd heart grows to contempt,
That woman's fool who beats her milky breast
To find the pleasure which her lover wears
As careless as the feather in his cap.

This boy is young, honest, and virtuous :
But he is also beautiful to see.
It cannot be that honesty which lives
Like to a beggar—or a miser—more,
By the minute ever weighing of itself,
Should quench the property of youthful blood.—
I'll hang my arms, lover trophies, round his neck ;
No premature dull winter in his hand
Will strike the citron from so brave a tree ;
Nor will autumnal languishment decaying
Leave me to sicken on so fair a stalk.—
Vap'rous desire, like a flame delay'd,
Creeps with my pulse, and babbles of its bounds,
Too mean, too limited a girth for it,
Impatience frets me—yet I will be proud,
And muse upon the conquest ere 'tis won—
For won it shall be.—Oh ! dull Potiphar,
To leave thy wife and travel for thy thrift,
While such a spirit tendeth her her wine.
Ho—give me music, there—louder. (*Exit.*)

SCENE. *Potiphar's House.*

(Enter Phrazanor and attendant.)

PHRAXANOR.

Dost thou despise love, then ?

ATTENDANT.

Madam, not quite,

A ruby that is pure is better worth
Than one that's flaw'd and streaked with the light :
So is a heart.

PHRAXANOR.

A ruby that is flaw'd
Is better worth than one that's sunk a mile
Beneath the dry sand of some desert place :
So is a heart.

ATTENDANT.

Then, madam, you would say
That there is nothing in the world but love.

PHRAXANOR.

Not quite : but I would say the fire o' th' sun
Doth not o'ershine the galaxy so far ;
Nor doth a torch within a jewell'd mine
Amaze the eye beyond this diamond here,
More than the ruddy offices of love
Do glow before the common steps of life.

ATTENDANT.

It is a knowledge worth the stooping for.

PHRAXANOR.

I am a woman, and am proud of it.

We are content that man shall take the lead,

Knowing he ever will look back on us

With doting eye, not caring how he steps.

Walking thus blindly, we may guide him so.

That he shall turn which way shall please us best :

So we can beckon him where'er we will,

And lead him ever round about his grave,

And in whene'er we list.

All matters that are greater than ourselves

Do trace their secret graces to our hands.

For glory captains struggle in the fight,

And play against the bulwark of the foe

Th' o'erbrowing engines in the stubborn siege ;

But love doth brace the garland on his head,

Making proud victory sweeter than it is.

What warlike prince did doff his laurel yet

But he did cast it in some fair maid's lap,

Saying ' my greatness I commit to thee,

Mistress of it, and me, and my proud heart ?'

He who has won whate'er he still desired,

Strewing his path with flowers of sweet success ;

Is yet a poor and melancholic man,

Sad as a beggar craving in a porch,
Being denied the woman he does love.
Love doth attach on independency : •
Bravery of suits, enriching the bright eye ;
Sweetness of person, pleasure in discourse,
And all those causes why men love themselves ;
Nay, even high offices, renown and praise,
Greatness of name, honour of men's regard,
Power and state, and sumptuous array,
Do pay a tribute at the lips of love ;
Fetching their freshness and their darling grace
From woman's approbation : waiting still
Close to her elbow till she please to smile,
Upon the cause whereof the man is proud,
And say that it is well ; our witchery
Lays claim unto their rarity, as our prime jest :
Tho' but the footstool of a royal King,
When we betray and trip him to the earth
His crown doth roll beneath us.—Horses have not
Such power to grace their lords or break their necks
As we, for we add passion to our power.
They think us gentle, second unto them,
And blind them to the wheels whereon we work.
Our will, is the strong rudder to our bark ;
Our wit, the sails ; beauty, the swelling tide ;
Caprice, the tackle, serving to all winds,

Tho' light as nothing, yet it tells like truth ;
Constancy, the anchor that's upheaved,
Ever falling and yet never struck ;
Thus do we voyage o'er the back o' the world,
Marking our image upon every wave,
Still moving onward to what port we will,
Ay, there it is ! who can control our wills ?
Judgment and knowledge, grey-beard wisdom, are
Devoted straw unto our burning will.—
We will not fear : and if we spy a toy
We'll reach it from the moon, or break our backs—
Why—what shall stop us in our enterprize ?

ATTENDANT.

Madam, your speech is fire.

PHRAXANOR.

Doth it burn you ?

ATTENDANT.

I did not think that I had lived so long
As I have lived.

PHRAXANOR.

Indeed !—why do you blush ?

ATTENDANT.

Because I never dared to trust my thought,
And, lo ! I have told it.

PHRAXANOR.

Are you in love.

ATTENDANT.

In sooth I ever feared to call it love ;
I knew a minstrel who had fall'n in love,
And though he sung ever the more, yet he
Never was merry again.

PHRAXANOR.

A wanton waste of frail mortality
To keep the portal of a sepulchre,
And wet a pleading lute with mellow tears,
And hoop the heart with melancholy strains,
That man does dote upon his very grief.
The gaudy colour'd story of his mind,
Imagination, is his bed-fellow ;
The past and future being both forgot,
The precious present running all to waste :
There is an ancient fashion in the world,
E'en sigh and choose again.

ATTENDANT.

This may be well.

PHRAXANOR.

It is the fivefold custom of the day.

ATTENDANT.

One flower at my bosom were enough,
And I have got one in my memory
I would not part with for a wilderness.
O ! it is delicate and lovely too,

Beyond the grossness of this huge world.
Your pardon, Madam, in all your chronicles
I never knew you credit your own sex
For perfect truth.

PHRAXANOR.

A fable.

ATTENDANT.

I hope not.

PHRAXANOR.

Oh, yes.

Give me your arm over these ivory steps,
I'll sit in my Lord's high seat, 'tis more in the air.
Our feeling wench is like the coin of the King,
No counterfeit, for it bears our impress,
The perfect image, absolute, enthron'd.
Now the King's coin belongs to many men,
And only by allowance is call'd his ;
Just so our feeling stands with circumstance.
Whene'er the King doth give a golden mark,
The addition is the image of himself.
'Tis so with woman's feeling—mark me well ;
'Tis true we have the power to love and hate,
Indulge antipathies and sympathies.
This power is present and not abstract—and therein
I found that man o'ergovern'd our weak sex,
Since when the very secondary sense

Has taught me how to overleap the first ;
I added so much art, which, in a woman,
Did never fail to make a giant kneel.
If Art and Honesty do run a race,
Which tumbles i' the mire ? ask those who starve.
Love is the purest essence of our souls,
And you can tell how many modest maids
Have died on't. Question the practice, and I do avouch,
So marr'd is Nature, that this constancy
(The rarest jewel that the world can boast)
Is the fine failing of our weaker sex ;
For men affirm, and I believe it too,
That Truth is greater than the world beside :
Therein we flag, herein our weakness faints.
Meekness, patience, tenderness, and love,
These qualities are our inheritance ;
Knowledge and wisdom, love of truth and power,
Are the strong engines in the heart of man.
Our chiefest virtue is our fortitude ;
Yet maids who die in love do lack it much,
Shewing the world a bauble to their griefs.
Our chiefest power is our stubborn will,
Which we do lack the constancy to cheque,
Being, it is our agent and not Truth's,
A giant dwarf, to forage for ourselves.
Therefore, since truth requires I should lay

Me prostrate at her foot and worship her,
Rather than wield her sceptre and her power ;
I shall be bold to follow mine own will,
And use the world as I find wit and means,
And as I know of nothing but old age,
So nothing will I fear—but I waste words,
You do not understand.

ATTENDANT.

Madam, assuredly your speech doth sound
Like sense—I cannot tell.—

PHRAXANOR.

Silence, no more.

Suppose you did expect the man you love,
To wait on you about this place and time,
What habit and what 'haviour would you use ?

ATTENDANT.

Were I, like you, a lady of estate,
I would adorn my brow with a bright star
Of crusted diamond's lustre—stained with gold,
Like to a frosted sunflower, when the morn
Blinks in the east, and plays upon its front.
My hair should bear a tiara of bright beads ;
And all my velvet should be looped about
With colours blending into harmony.
I would sip water fragranc'd with gum
To give my breathing sweetness. Half reclined,

I would receive him with a free discourse
Which he should lead, wherein I'd acquiesce.

PHRAXANOR.

Silly pet! there lies more mischief in a smile
Than in the King's house, and all his waste
Of wreathed gold and weighty jewelry.—
Come, help to dress me straight.

ATTENDANT.

What fashion, madam?

PHRAXANOR.

Blue velvet is

Full to the eye, tho' in itself retired :
It suits my age, and lighteth off the skin.
'Tis low o' the neck ; fit thou some slender lace
About the rim. The jewel shewn
But scantily is oft desired most,
And tender nets scare not the timid bird.
A little secret is a tempting thing
Beyond wide truth's confession.—Give me flowers
That I may hang them in my ample hair ;
And sprinkle me with lavender and myrrh.
Zone me around in a broad chain of gold,
And wreath my arms with pearls.—So—this will do—
And in good time, for yonder Joseph comes, (*aside.*)
Which saves me the command to bring him here :

I did intend to fetch him at this time.—

Give me a cup of wine.

(Enter JOSEPH.)

Madam, so please——

PHRAXANOR.

By and by I'll hear—Myrah, depart—

Nay, stop: arrange my sandal first. *(Exit Attendant.)*

JOSEPH.

I have

A message from my Lord.

PHRAXANOR.

Put that to rest.

Give me that golden box, there's ointment in it.

(She spills it on his head.)

JOSEPH.

Madam, what must I say? my state is low,

Yet you do treat me as you might my Lord

When he besought your hand.

PHRAXANOR.

Must I get up

And cast myself in your sustaining arms.

To sink you to a seat?—come, sit—sit.

Now I will neighbour you, and tell you why

I cast that ointment on you.

JOSEPH.

I did not
Desire it.

PHRAXANOR.

You asked me for it.

JOSEPH.

Madam!

PHRAXANOR.

You breathed upon me as you did advance,
And sweets do love sweets for an offering.
My breath is sweet but subtle, and I dared
Not put my lips half close enough to thine
To render back the favour ; therefore I say
The obligation did demand so much—
Why what amaze is now upon thy face—
Will nothing please ?

JOSEPH.

Madam, your arm—pray move.

PHRAXANOR.

You peevish bird—like a sick eagle I
Could devour, but may not.

JOSEPH.

I do beseech you,
If you respect your place, or my fair name,
Undo your 'pris'ning arms and let me go.

K

PHRAXANOR.

Do not give cause to fear the woman you
Might love.

JOSEPH.

I would far sooner honour her.

PHRAXANOR.

Cold, cold, still cold ; I eye thee like to one
That dieth in my arms : beware, you chill
Me too : you do a wrong, and herein court
Much danger. I would risk the world for you,
But blow me cold with thy sharp frosty breath
And these same arms that gird thee round about
May turn to bitter chains. We are most dear
In our affections ; in vengeance most resolved.

JOSEPH.

Madam, I have a spirit beyond fear.
God knows, the duty that I owe your lord
Would break my heart did I commit this sin.
I have borne this besieging temperately,
Hoping your modesty would be awake.
O do not force the loathing that lies hid
Within my gall to rush into my face.

PHRAXANOR.

This is the greatest blessing that you shun.

JOSEPH.

Or the worst sin ?

PHRAXANOR.

O, weigh not with such scales.

JOSEPH.

Madam, have a care.

PHRAXANOR.

Listen to me,

I'll set my little foot o' thy neck else ;—
 Thou art like a beautiful and drowsy snake,
 Cold, and inanimate, and coiled around
 Upon a bank of rarest sun-blown flowers.
 My eye shall be the renovating sun—

JOSEPH.

Forbear, I'm sick to think on't.

PHRAXANOR.

You do

Overdo this art, for Nature sure
 Never did put disgust upon a lip
 So near a woman's : a cup of poison, perhaps,
 Might curdle all the features of thy face ;
 But this same blandishment upon my brow,
 Could never chase the colour from thy cheeks.

JOSEPH.

Love being forced, so sickeneth the sense,
 That dull monotony is nothing to it.—
 A palled appetite is sweeter far
 Than shocked modesty and fierce distaste.

PHRAXANOR.

You are too dead a weight.

JOSEPH.

Why, let me go.

PHRAXANOR.

My arms are faint ; smile thou, they are ribs of steel.

JOSEPH.

The sun ne'er shined in a pitch black night.

PHRAXANOR.

O ignorant boy, it is the secret hour
The sun of love doth shine most goodly fair.
Contemptible darkness never yet did dull
The splendour of love's light.
You've touched my tongue with eloquence, for know
This is a theme whereon it loves to dwell,—
As a fresh falcon in the morning's breeze,—
At love's slight curtains, that are made of sighs,
Be it e'er so dark, silence is seen to stand
Like to a closed flower in the night ;
Or, like a lovely image drooping down
With its fair head aslant and finger raised,
And mutely on its shoulder slumbering.
Pulses do sound quick music in love's ear,
And blended fragrance in his startled breath
Doth hang the hair with drops of magic dew.
All outward thoughts, all common circumstance,

Are buried in the dimple of his smile ;
And the great city as a vision sails
From out the closing doors of the hushed mind.
His heart strikes audibly against his ribs
As a dove's wing doth freak upon a cage,
Forcing the blood athro' the cramped veins
Faster than Dolphins do o'ershoot the tide
Coursed by the yawning Shark. Therefore I say
Night blooming Ceres, and the star-flower sweet,
The honeysuckle, and the eglantine,
And the ringed vinous tree that yields red wine,
Together with all intertwining flowers,
Are plants most fit to ramble o'er each other,
And form the bower of all-precious love ;
Matting the sun with fragrant bloom and leaves
From jealous interception of love's gaze.—
This is love's cabin in the light of day—
But O ! compare it not with the black night,
Delay thou sun, and give me instant night—
I am hungry for thee : or advance thou walls
And close me in a cabin so confined
That artificial night may kill the day,
And the shrill cricket sleeping in the hearth
May wake and sing unnoted of my ears,
Mistaking thy prompt counterfeit for thee ;
The whitest clouds are pillows to bright stars,
Ah ! therefore shroud thine eyes.

JOSEPH.

For shame!—

PHRAXANOR.

Henceforth I'll never knit with glossed bone,
But interlace my fingers among thine,
And ravel them, and interlace again,
So that no work that's done content the eye,
That I may never tire in my work.

JOSEPH.

Would that my lord were come.

PHRAXANOR.

Thy hair shall be
The silken trophy of the spirit of love,
Where I will lap, fair chains, my wreathed arms.

JOSEPH.

What's to be done? Madam, give way.

PHRAXANOR.

Beware, you'll crack my lace.

JOSEPH.

You will be hurt, I trow.

PHRAXANOR.

O for some savage strength!

JOSEPH.

Away, away,

Away!

PHRAXANOR.

So, you are loose—I pray thee kill me—do.

JOSEPH.

Let me pass out at door.

PHRAXANOR.

I have a mind

You shall at once walk with those honest limbs
Into your grave.

JOSEPH.

Are you a woman, madam ?

PHRAXANOR.

No—I was a woman, but I am a dragon :
My nostrils are stuffed full of splenetic fire,
My tongue is turned into a furious sting,
With which I'll strike you—Ha ! be sure I will.

JOSEPH.

Madam, I did wish you no offence.

PHRAXANOR.

What a devil, no !

JOSEPH.

I did not like your love,
And did refuse your offer ; which was wise.

PHRAXANOR.

Was it so ? have you so much scorn left ?
Unload it in my lap—let me have all,
That I may hate for something. Malice is proud,
And will not yield to trifles—despise me more—do.

JOSEPH.

I ne'er despised the lady of my lord,
Only her vice.

PHRAXANOR.

My lord—my lord—cannot you mouth
That word distinctly from my lady—go hang.
My lord!—He surely shall be paid full home
That honours lord's above a lady's love.
Thou hast no lord but me, I am thy lord:
And you shall find it, too—fool that I was
To stoop my stateliness to such a calf
Because he bore about a panther's hide.
That is not blood which fainteth in thy veins,
But only infant milk. Thou minion!
Bought up for drudgery with idle gold,
How darest thou look or wink thy trait'rous eye,
Much less to think, when I command thy will?
Oh impudence! to scorn a noble dame!
Wer't not that royalty has kiss'd my hand
I'd strike thee.

JOSEPH.

Madam, be temperate.

PHRAXANOR.

Who bade thee speak, impudent slave? beware,
I'll have you whipp'd.—O! I am mad to think

That ever I should bring myself to scorn
Myself for such a stubborn minion as thou art.
Ha!—thou shadow—thou atomy!—
Filled full of nothing—making a brave shew,
Like to a robe blown with the boastful wind—
Thou worse than ice, for that melts to the sun—
Disgrace to Egypt and her feverish air—
You shall not stay in Egypt.

JOSEPH.

I grieve at that.

PHRAXANOR.

You shall stay here—and since
There is no spirit of life in all this shew,
Only a cheat unto the sanguine eye,
Thou shalt be given to the leach's hands
To study causes on thy bloodless heart
Why men should be like geese.—A pretty pass
I have brought my dauntless spirit to. These knees,
Which ne'er did bend but to pluck suitors up,
And put them out of hope. O! I am mad—
These feet by common accident have trod
On better necks than e'er bowed to the king,
And must I tie them in a band of list
Before a slave like thee?

JOSEPH.

Still I look honestly.

PHRAKANOR.

Your looks are grievous liars, like my eyes ;
They juggled me to think thou wert a man—
If seeming make men, thou art one indeed—
Seeming !—pshaw ! Why what had you to do,
When you might feast your lips on my eye-lids,
To hang your head o'er your left shoulder thus,
(Like to a madman doting on a straw
Past the wide wonder of the precious world)
Blinking at Honesty, which beguiled you
With its full semblance stuff'd with nothing real ;
While I, like an icicle, frozen in the shade
Of some dull yew tree brooding o'er a grave,
Was shunn'd avoidably.—Thou Honesty !
Like the armed tooth within the gilded snake,
Making its beauty feared and yet admired,
For that its poison is of precious use.
Thou that makest nothing of a dame like me,
Shew me thy proper pet, that when one such
In all her soberness may meet my eye,
I may prepare to burn her with my gaze,
And twit her with my scorn.

JOSEPH.

Honest women

Are made of tender stuff, and yet too tough
To warp or quail before the eye of vice.

PHRAXANOR.

Soft, what a fool I am to rave about—
I have mistook my passion all this while.
Thou implement of honesty, it is
Not wrath but laughter that is due to you.
I'll keep you as an antic, that when dull
You may kill heavy time.—Look up, you slave :
A woman's pity lodges by remorse :
I never knew a danger I did fear.
Think you that honesty will save you from
The gallows ?

JOSEPH.

God knows, not I ; this I know,
I never will be guilty of disgrace.
If it do come, I'll bear it as I've borne
Your burthens ; sweat I may, but not complain.

PHRAXANOR.

Dry as a wild boar's tongue in honesty—
And yet that hath some essence tending to
Its savage growth. You shock of beaten corn—
You hollow pit, lacking a goodly spring,
Tempting the thirsty soul to come and drink,
Then cheating him with dust and barrenness—
Thou laughable affection of man's form !

JOSEPH.

Like to a hatchet in a madman's hands

Your wrath still glances o' the dangerous side,
And hits yourself.

PHRAXANOR.

Are all these Canaanites

Like you? ha!

JOSEPH.

And they were, 'twere no disgrace.

PHRAXANOR.

I'll prick my arm, and they shall suck my blood,
To make men of them.—
Ah! you temperate and drowsy drone—
You empty glass,—you baulk to eyes, lips, hands—
Ha, ha! I will command the masons straight
Hew you in stone, and set you on the gate
Hard by the public walk where dames resort.
Therein you shall fool more admiring eyes
(A plague upon the embers in my throat)
For you fooled mine, and I like company.
It is the proper stuff whereof thou'rt made,
Thy colour and thy heat is counterfeit,
Like a stone image, fit to be admired,
But rather to be mocked than to be loved—
There shalt thou stand, the mark of my contempt.

JOSEPH.

You do me wrong—unlady-like, and bitter wrong.

A scourgeable, a scarlet-hooded wrong,
Thus to pack my shoulders with your shame.

PHRAXANOR.

I prythee do not fret, my pretty lute;
I shall shed tears, sweet music, if you fret.
You shall be free, like a rare charmed snake,
To range a woman's secret chamber thro'—
Here, take my cloak, and gird it o'er thy loins,
And steep thy somewhat browned face in milk :
I have a sister, a young tender thing,
To her I will prefer thee, a she squire,
To brace her garments, and to bleach her back
With sweet of almonds. A parrot, you !
Tiring her idle ear, and gaping for
An almond for thy pains. O you snipe !

JOSEPH.

This may be well, but it affects not me.

PHRAXANOR.

O madam, do not fret—madam, I say,
When maids go to the wars thou shall be fetch'd—
Bring thou a knitting needle in thy hands.

JOSEPH.

Madam, you pass all bounds of modesty.

PHRAXANOR.

Pray write upon thy cap " this is a man "—
A plague and the pink fever fall on thee.

I am thrown out : you've nettled me outright.—
What a devil had you to do with honesty ?—
Who knocks there ? wait a while, the door is fast—
Nay, stand you here ! I will not let you pass.

Enter Attendant.

Madam, the noble Potiphar's returned.

PHRAXANOR.

How say'st thou ? Joseph, he doth bring
Thy coffin underneath his arm.

JOSEPH.

Madam,

My business was to tell you of this thing,
But your great passion still o'erflooded it.

PHRAXANOR.

I am sick of two extremes,
Tameness doth lodge in dove-cots in a farm !
Spleen, with wild eagles, in the mountain pines.
I'll purchase nothing of this tameness :
I cannot sue again without disgrace.—
Yet I would sooner conquer on my knee
Than yield me with a crown upon my head
To the blank issue of my foiled desire.
Come Joseph, if you'll take me by the hand,
I'll whisper you hereafter.

JOSEPH.

Madam, no,

PHRAXANOR.

O fool! you tie a stone about your neck,
And hear the main roar hoarsely underneath.

JOSEPH.

God is above both it, and you, and me.
I'll stand the course.

PHRAXANOR.

Ha! sayest thou?—abide it then—come on—
This pause is a bitter silence for thee, slave.
My brain is active.

JOSEPH.

Would your heart were so.

PHRAXANOR.

By what fierce means I'll drive thee to thy grave,
Or shroud thy life to come in misery,
I will not speak; so the discovery,
Being unsure, will work more bitterly.

JOSEPH.

Where will this end?

PHRAXANOR.

Aye, think on that—Humph! my disdain is proud—
He comes—he comes—my injuries rejoice!
I turn my back on thee.

Enter POTIPHAR and Attendants.

PHRAXANOR.

Give me breath, I say, give me breath!

POTIPHAR.

How fares my lady? why do you rather
Strike your clenched knuckles thus against your breast
Than press that breast to mine?

PHRAXANOR.

You return merrily, my lord, and you
Went hence merrily.

POTIPHAR.

Why not? I urged my horses for thy sake.

PHRAXANOR.

The bird doth whistle over hill and dale,
Leaving its roost for food and exercise,
And merrily it whistles back again;
But all its mirth is turned into a moan
When in its nest the weazle is espied
Sucking its speckled eggs.

POTIPHAR.

Why, what is this?

Some witch, or some magician has been here.
Your speech is idle, but your look is fierce.—
How dost thou? Steward, is my household sound?
I will not ask, for never at thy hands
Have I found aught but equable justice yet,
Duty, and due respect. Embrace me, madam.

PHRAXANOR.

Stand off! impurity doth 'witch my form,

Which blood must wash away. I am haunted here
With a loose demon waiting to be chained.

POTIPHAR.

How sayest thou ?

PHRAXANOR.

Listen to me. Stand forth, thou slave !—
Thou Hebrew bondman, unto Potiphar !
I do forgive thee that thou apest the step
Of honesty, for thou hast frugal need
Of all the good belonging to thy soul,
And all the art that thou canst conjure up
To get thy drift accredited.

POTIPHAR.

I hoped to find a steward of good trust,
A wholesome household of good government,
And a fair wife content and unaggrieved.
These things I left ; but here, alas ! I find
Some perilous rottenness instead of peace.

PHRAXANOR.

Pray give me leave. Bondman, report yourself.
I do believe thy honesty so great
Unto this noble lord, thy master, here,
That of the stream of gold from the king's treasury,
Which thro' thy hands did course to other men's
Around the suburbs and the city mart,
No doit did ever stick unto thy palm

L.

Tending to thy particular behoof;
Nor e'er did gild thy honest fingers more
Than in its passage through them; further, I think
That you have pruned his interest jealously,
Have kept his cares still crouching at his feet,
And (rarity of servants) still have made
His interest thine; and his fair name abroad
Have dew'd as freshly as if all his shame
Should have been reaped by thee. Is not this true?
I do believe it. Speak, and fear not.

JOSEPH.

This is a little—yet I do not see
Why you should wish to prattle of my good.

PHRAKANOR.

Right—right.

JOSEPH.

But since I do not fear
Or any act or accident of mine,
My tongue shall unfold the record of my heart
Just as my deeds did only want a name.
When I was brought a stranger to this land
And sold unto the chain of my dear lord,
Out of an honest bosom I besought
That in his mercy God would pity me,
And lift me up a little from the dust;
Whereat this Master of the universe

Did turn my lord's eye in his servant's face ;
And he was pleased, and tied his trust on me,
E'en as a man descending in a pit
Doth brace his rope about the safest tree.
Fair trust begetteth confidence, for men
Do waste the precious treasures of the spring
Still looking onward to the spring to come :
Therefore my Lord did hand me these his keys
That never yet had left his proper side,
And soundly slept upon my stewardship,
Nor ever hath an act of mine aroused
The peaceful slumber that he hath enjoyed
Nor spotted.—

PHRAXANOR.

Peace, you grow tedious : let me
Finish the goodly picture of your work.
Your trust was pure as silver, bright as a flame,
Forged in your equity, fined in your truth,
Stubborn in honesty as stapled iron.
Your charity was wise, like soaking rain
That falleth in a famine on that ground
That hath the seed locked up—so far all honour :
Your love and duty to my lord were like
A mine of gold—but out, alas ! The fault—
You fell in twain like to a rotten plank,

When he was tempted in to trust his wealth,
There was no bottom to't, he broke his neck—
Will you praise him, my lord?

POTIPHAR.

Why so?

PHRAXANOR.

Because he never must be praised again.
A howling dirge for ever in his ears
Buries this praise. Steward, give up thy keys.

JOSEPH.

Obedience ever was my fault, my lord.
Here I do lay them at your gracious foot :
If I did e'er deserve to loose them thus,
May they fall into chains and hug me round
Like a strong serpent crushing out my life.

PHRAXANOR.

I have a mind to haul thee by the hair,
Singular ideot, that cannot fear—
My indignation, that should burn you up,
Doth fall like fire on water. Tell me, you slave,
Arise, and front my wronged nobility,
Nor slink in wonder on thy craven knees.
In what part of my body canst thou spy
The name of strumpet? wherein do I look false?—
O, my lord—my lord—the man that you did love
Hath much abused me.

POTIPHAR.

Ah!—if it be so—

PHRAXANOR.

If!—

If it be so—the famed she of Babylon,
In her confession and her act of guilt
Was never so besieged by the soldiery.
Say I would change the vintage for the room,
Still in the passage I did find him there,
Like to a lobbied spaniel that mistakes
Some stranger for his owner : like that dog
He still would wind about my hasty step,
And feign as he would leap into my lap.
When e'er I chanced to air me in the street,
Still was this steward going the same way.
Whene'er I called attendance from my slaves,
They were employed, and he straight started forth.
The chamber where you sleep he did invade,
But cries, and threats yet held him in the slips
And scared his purpose from him.—If it be so !
Why on this very spot, and at this very time
You take him laying hands on me.

POTIPHAR.

Wherefore did you not give him to the guard ?

PHRAXANOR.

Aye, there it is : his art and guile are such,

(Being more dangerous because unknown)
That I dared trust my honour in no hand
But my dear lord's : therefore I bore all
(Tho' a little ruffled) as patient as I could.

POTIPHAR.

So honest and so vile ? This is most strange.

PHRAKANOR.

O, not at all,—no whit—'tis nothing strange.
The fox doth never steal into the fold
Till he hath forecast all his premises.
The thief that scorns your money and is bent
To crop the blossom of your secret peace,
Comes crowned with flowers like May, as sweet as June,
And with a mask stolen from the wardrobe of
Fair honesty, and gleaned of other men.
He is the adder both in sight and touch—
Beautiful malice, glistening, deadly wretch.
I will example you : a man so acts
Fair with himself and fairer still to you :
He passes all his offices and trust,
And gleaneth honour in each enterprise.
This may not be all honour in the main ;
Perchance his face is feigned. He hath some end
Worth all this pains to him in answering.
Grant that a base man may live honestly ;
Where shall you catch him, and how find him out ?

Why, when the secret end for which he works
Is laid unguarded 'fore his greedy eyes
He draws him to a point : and, let me ask,
Is not a woman mettle for this trail?
And does not all this pompous virtue blind
Her lord's keen eye, engaging her's the while
To lodge him in her thought for his behalf.
Am not I fair ? is not the steward good ?
Pleasing my lord with his fair services ?—
My lord, away ; the steward's goodness curds :
He casts lascivious eyes unto my bed ;
Lays nets about my feet, stuns my sick ears
With protestations and beseechings, urged
With oaths enough to undermine a tower ;
As tho' my lord were dead and in his grave,
Or loosely wived.—O 'tis a plain thing,
Marvel not that I am so completely learned
In all the meanness of this vicious course ;
I have had time to think upon the cause
Who bore the penalties.

POTIPHAR.

Away, dissembler !

Speak not unto me. O, you shameful boy !
Were it not for the virtue of my wife
You had wrung my heart in grief, with less remorse
Than vultures draw the entrails of their prey,

Thou most ignoble boy ! lowness, I see,
Be it e'er so cherished or exalted, will
Still turn to its own bias.—Ah ! 'wretched knave,
That dost abuse sweet nature in thy form ;
Proficient in craft, not honesty—
Artful deceiver to all good men's eyes—
Bred, none know where, 'mongst wretched villanies,
And nurtured by the worst of human kind.
Thy father surely was some ruffian knave—

JOSEPH.

Cut me to pieces, or imprison me,
I will not say a word to grieve thine ear,
For I do love thee, sir, dear as my life—
But by the holy God who reigns above
I'll not stand tamely and these arms unbound
And hear my sire abused, for I love him
Dearer than the respect I owe to you.

PHRAXANOR.

Who was thy father, didst thou ever know ?
Perhaps thou mistakest some honest man for him.

JOSEPH.

A man who was a herdsman in the vales
Of gentle Canaan, full of woods and streams ;
Who, thro' his industry and honest thrift,
Hath oxen, ploughs, and granaries, and tents,
Cattle, and bondmen, and a goodly flock

Of noble sons who honour his grey head ;
Wherein he feels more happy than a king,
Ruling of love, not power.

PHRAXANOR.

You were resolved,
Howe'er you love perfection in your sire,
To choose a certain and a sudden way
To find disgrace ; and end your wretched life
Despised, unnoted, wicked, and forlorn.

JOSEPH.

Madam, pray peace. O ! is it not enough
That you do lead me in a silken string,
Like a young heifer to a sacrifice,
But you must goad my willingness along,
Not my delay ?

PHRAXANOR.

What means the slave, I trow ?
This is some cunning trick to wind about.
I do not think that any honest man
Could e'er be sire to one so base as thou.

JOSEPH.

I bear no malice, madam, tho' you are merciless.
But to speak out my mind, I'll tell you what :
There is no city feast, nor city show,
Th' encampment of the king and soldiery,
Rejoicings, revelries, and victories,

Can equal the remembrance of my home ;—
When in the morning we have issued forth,
Our Father, Jacob, with his manly form
Girt round with looks of sweet obedience,
Each struggling to honour him the most ;
While from the wrinkles deep of many years,
Enfurrowed smiles, like violets in snow,
Touched us with heat and melancholy cold,
Mingling our joy, with sorrow for his age :
There were my brothers, habited in skins ;
Nine goodly men, myself, and a sweet youth
Too young to mix in any thing but joy ;
And in his hands each led a milk-white steer,
Hung o'er with roses, garlanded with flowers,
Laden with fragrant panniers of green boughs,
Of bays and myrtle interleaved with herbs,
Wherein was stored our country wine and fruit,
And bread sweetened with honey, and dried figs,
And pressed curds, and choicest rarities,
Stores of the cheerless season of the year ;
While at our sides the women of our tribe,
With pitchers on their heads, filled to the brim
With wine, and honey, and with smoking milk,
Made proud the black-eyed heifers with the swell
Of the sweet anthem sung in plenty's praise.
Thus would we journey to the wilderness,

And fixing on some peak that did o'erlook
The spacious plains that lay displayed beneath,
Where we could see our cattle, like to specks
In the warm meads, browsing the juicy grass,
There pitch our tent, and feast, and revel out,—
The minutes flying faster than our feet
That vaulted nimbly to the pipe and voice,
Making fatigue more sweet by appetite.
There stood the graceful Reuben by my sire,
Piping a ditty, ardent as the sun,
And, like his beams, stealing renovation
Into the darkest corner of the soul,
And filling it with light. Yonder, women grouped,
My sisters and their maids, with ears subdued,
With bosoms panting from the eager dance,
Against each other leaned ; as I've seen
A graceful tuft of lilies of the vale
Oppressed with rain, upon each other bend,
While freshness has stolen o'er them. Some paces off
My brothers pitched the bar, or ploughed for fame ;
Each two with their two heifers harnessed fast
Unto the shaft, and laboured till the sweat
Had crept about them like a sudden thaw.
Anon they tied an eagle to a tree,
And strove at archery ; or with a bear
Struggled for strength of sinew. These were no slaves—

No villain's sons to rifle passengers.—

The sports being done, the winners claim'd the spoil :

Or hide, or feather, or renowned bow,

Or spotted cow, or fleet and pampered horse.

And then my Father blessed us, and we sang

Our sweet way home again. Oft I have ached

In memory of these precious hours passed,

And wept upon those keys that were my pride,

And soaked my pillow thro' the heavy night.

Alas ! God willing, I'll be patient.

PHRAXANOR.

The fool will steal away my husband's ears, (*aside.*)

And mar my triumph. This is a sweet report :

Thy kin, it seems, did never know of shame

Till you did earn it.

JOSEPH.

Did you speak, madam ?

PHRAXANOR.

Dull minion, yes I did. Thou hast the blot

Of all thy family : their infamy

Is thy sole portion, and you bear it well.

JOSEPH.

Vex me no more : I bend unto your wrench,

Pray thee rest satisfied.

PHRAXANOR.

How came it, sir,

Since you have gone so daintily about
That you were sold to our Egyptian whips,
Far from thy boasted family and friends ?
It argued not their love or deep regard
To covet coin before your company.—
Were you stolen thence ?

JOSEPH.

Madam, to save a blush, I cannot lie.
My brothers sold me to the Midianites.

PHRAXANOR.

Go to—whose fault was this ; or theirs, or thine ?

JOSEPH.

Both theirs and mine, if I may judge aright.

PHRAXANOR.

Ha ! have I track'd you ? Some foul practices,
Some evil, like this gross one of to-day,
Expelled you forth of their fair company—
You did-do vilely.

JOSEPH.

No, upon my life.

Compassion, not reproof, is all that's due
To me for this mischance.

PHRAXANOR.

Humph !—I do fear it.

POTIPHAR.

Joseph, sad youth, why hast thou done this thing,

My choler's melted into burning tears
That scald my manly cheeks as they descend.
I had no children, and bore you such love
No father could bear more. In spite
Of your unnatural wrong I cannot wring
From out my bosom all the rooted love,
Lest it should leave a sore and dangerous wound
Too near my heart. What's to become of thee?

JOSEPH.

No matter, my good lord :—but talk not thus
Or you will break my heart.

POTIPHAR.

O fie—fie—

JOSEPH.

If I did ever wrong thee in an act,
In thought, or in imagination,
May I never taste bread again—O God !
Try me a little less : my infirmity is love.
I can be dumb, and suffer, but must speak
Where there's a strife of love between two hearts.

PHRAXANOR.

Slave, do you mean to say you did not sit
Upon that sofa there, and worry me
Within this hour ?

JOSEPH.

Not as you would infer.

PHRAXANOR.

A quibble—what inference is to be drawn
When you did hold me in your twisted arms,
Till you had burst my chain with violence?
Speak—liar. *(She plucks his beard.)*

JOSEPH.

Try at my heart, madam.

POTIPHAR.

Madam, you do forget your dignity.

PHRAXANOR.

My Lord, my indented lips still taste of his.
Myrah, bring water here and wash my hand,
It is offended by this leprous slave.
Passion is privileged. Did you but feel
My wrong as it doth rankle in my breast
You'd cleave him to the girdle.

POTIPHAR.

You shall have
Full justice for the injury, ne'er doubt.—
How dar'dst thou do as thou hast been accused?

PHRAXANOR.

Thou hast denied me : what hast thou to say ?

POTIPHAR.

And could'st thou deal so shamefully by me ?

PHRAXANOR.

Put him to that.—Aye, let him answer that.

JOSEPH.

I am like a simple dove within a net,
The more I strive, the faster I am bound.
My wit is plain and straight, not crooked craft.
The sight that reacheth heaven tires in a lane.

PHRAXANOR.

You will not answer me ; this is the strangest knave
I ever met or heard of in my time :
His impudence downright amazes me.—
Slave, do you know you've given me the lie,
And laid my honour open to be scorned ?
How long, I pray thee, must I wait at hand
Till you will condescend to cast my crimes
And mar my honesty ?

JOSEPH.

The truth is this :

The character my lady hath bestowed
Is borrowed of herself and fixed on me
To feed her disappointment and revenge.
She would have tempted me, but I refused
To heap up shame on my lord's patience.
'Twas she who drew me to the sofa there
And held me (a hard trial of my strength)
When honesty did help me break away.

PHRAXANOR.

Ha—ha—ha !—my lord, there is your steward.

His master-piece of art is shewn at last—
 Ha—ha!—I pr'ythee do take no offence,
 But let him go, and slip your slight revenge.
 Now that the man is known I have no fear.
 Thus cunning ever spoileth its own batch;—
 Doth it not, Steward?—continue him in trust :
 But for this fault he were a worthy man.
 I shall retire, my lord, and take my leave :
 You will find me in my chamber : stay not long,
 Unless your company should charm your stay,
 Which I shall take unkind. . Steward, farewell—
 For ever fare-thee-well : and learn this truth ;
 When women are disposed to wish thee well
 Do not thou trespass on their courtesy,
 Lest in their deep resentments you lie drowned,
 As now you do in mine. I leave you, sir,
 Without a single comfort in the world. *(Exit.)*

JOSEPH.

God is in heaven, madam ! with your leave.

POTIPHAR.

I have a mind to cut you all to pieces—

JOSEPH.

Patience, dear lord ; you will repent my blood.

POTIPHAR.

Or tear thee limb from limb, and strew thy bones
 About the shameful walk where executions are

M

Done in the city. Hark ; 'tis the door of mercy
That jarreth in my breast to shut thee out,
A stranger thence for ever. You held my heart
In trust, but I am right glad to find it is
Mine own again, since you would have broken it.
For your sake I will never trust to man,
Believe in gentle eyes, or honest brows,
Or years of service. If it will please thine ear
(As being thy work of wit perchance it may)
Know thou hast broke my faith with the fair world,
And turned my eyes suspiciously upon
Most honest men : and ever from this hour
I do divorce you, with the rest of men,
From my sore bosom : looking upon all
As they did watch the moment to betray ;
For I did right, yet wrong in trusting thee.—
Go to thy dungeon, go. *(Exit.)*

JOSEPH.

Ah ; go thy ways.—The love I bear to thee,
And loss of thine, doth grieve me far beyond
This woman's witchcraft and my own disgrace.—
Come, put me underground : tho' not quite dead,
For hope and patience keep me company.
(Exit guarded.)

SCENE.—*In a Prison.*

(*Enter JOSEPH.*)

JOSEPH.

There is still a good side to be found
E'en in a man's bad fortune :
For I that am a prisoner in disgrace
Do keep the keys, and am the gaoler here,
Wardour to mine own liberty and ease.
Integrity surmounteth accident ;
Its grief is pure, and mixed with charity,
Feeling for others more than for itself.
In this invisible armour men may stand
Within the grasp of danger and of death,
And from the profound bottom of the heart
Cry out content.—My Lord's fair lady now,
With eyes as quick to trammel, as betray,
Hath set her spell upon some other brow.—
I, guiltless, suffer ; she triumphs guiltily :
Therein I am happy, fortunate, and glad.
My Lord, unjustly, hath condemned me false,
But I, thank God, do know mine honesty,
And therein am I happy and rejoice.
I rise with Heaven tho' I fall with man.
Like music at a death, there is sweet pain
Within the core of griefs however sad.

For retrospection is a precious shade,
And God hath taught us there are better things
Than any we can wail. That man unmans himself,
And casts his fortune in an ignorant grave
Who thrusts his passion past his patience.
Learn to fear God, love honesty, and thrive—
O, there is physic in our injuries !
A crown angelic, mixt in mortal thorns !
Say, that you love some lady in her bloom,
And she hath set her heart another way,
Still you do love yourself that you did love,
And count your riches by your precious loss ;
And tho' you balm her mem'ry with your tears,
It is a blessing that you still can weep,
And be enamoured of ripe sufferance.—
Say, that some man hath got a noble heart
Tied to the wheel whereon the nation works ;
(Such slips there are, and such will ever be)—
And say that wheel doth work a jealous round,
Having no circle for the general good,
But the particular behoof alone
Of power installed, of grandeur, and renown ;
Why such a ruddy heart must bear the strain,
Living on thought instead of action :
And it is true, that they do never break,
But, spite of pain, continual and severe,

Nourish them proudly, and do hug their griefs
With wonderful affection.
What sire hath lost his son, or son his sire,
But time hath made his grief a holy joy ?
That which we lose, we mourn, but must rejoice
That we have ever had. Wise Providence
Doth star and split our sorrows severally,
So that we may not fall into despair.
If that the son be vicious, it is well
That a vile course hath had a speedy end :
If virtuous, it is a balm that flows
Athro' the sorrow of the time to come.
I grieve that I have lost my Father's house,
But how I joy to weep and think of him.
I grieve to think upon my brothers' sin,—
But I do love my brothers past their sin.—
Look up, you men, in poverty and grief,
Weigh your deserts, amend the rottenness,
And all the goodness nourish in the sun :
Look out upon the world, and bow to Heaven,
And take your stand as you did mean to run
A true and prosperous race.—Remorseless men
Are neither fit to live nor fit to die ;—
All others are within the pale of hope,
And cheerfulness and honesty will soon

Lead them to love long life, and love themselves
For virtue's sake.—What, ho ! there—up—arise.

(Enter CHIEF BUTLER and CHIEF BAKER.)

CHIEF BUTLER.

Good morrow, Joseph.

CHIEF BAKER.

Why should we up ? why rise ?

JOSEPH.

Because the sun doth thro' the grating peer,
And on its beams ride hopes of better days.
The eye of God so sphereth round the world,
And penetrates to palaces and cells.

CHIEF BAKER.

And you are merry that you see the sun
Which is shut from you !—would that my conceits
Were fantasied like your's, then any straw
Would serve for laughter, and encourage hope.

JOSEPH.

Come—come—you are too dull—churlishly given.

CHIEF BAKER.

Aye—I am given to a dungeon cell,
And, wonderful to you, do not rejoice.

JOSEPH.

And do you mumble o'er your just deserts,

What would you have ? you pass from day to day
In sloth and idleness, which you do love—
Were you sent forth to grind the public corn,
To split with wedges stubborn grained wood,
Or tasked to some laborious exercise ;
You then would loath that life, and groan for this
As a sweet pleasure and a long'd retreat.—
O ! you do bear a poison in your mind
That would not let you rest in Paradise.
Your discontent doth go a tortoise pace
And travels as it sleeps.—For shame—for shame—
Have you done evil, swerved from the man ?
And will you sink yourself below the beast,
And howl upon your punishment ?
Pr'ythee conceive a sober thoughtful life
Is better worth than folly's restless round.
Make of your mind a world wherein to dwell ;
Your independence then is proof and wise,
And sweet content may mock these rusty keys.—

CHIEF BAKER.

How is it, that thou art a prisoner, and do keep
The keys and bolts, the very means that lock
You from your liberty ?

JOSEPH.

Because mine honesty is greater than
My love of liberty. Tho' I were sure

That I should linger here till old and grey,
I would not break my trust or fly my fate.
The first is mean, and robs men of content ;
The last is cowardly, and lacking power.

CHIEF BAKER. .

Lend me the keys ; I'd answer thy rebuke
With opposite action.

JOSEPH.

No, stay here and mend.—
How is it you do look so sad to-day ?

CHIEF BUTLER.

I dreamed a dream, and that doth make me sad.
Like to a thistle in the autumn wind ;
Each breath that smells of winter makes me shake,
And robs me of some down. That which doth touch
My estate, doth fright it : and this sudden dream
Hath struck me like to news o' the sudden brought
To one condemn'd to die—all hope—all fear—
And yet more fear than hope ; for he more fears
To die, than loves to live—
So fares it with my hopes of liberty :
I do more fear to stay within this place,
Than I shall love my liberty without.

JOSEPH.

Tell me thy dream. Great God doth often shew
The secret path to good by such small means,

Advancing so his majesty on fate
That men are masters of their destiny.
A thing like this might save a sinking world.
Whatever matters press against the heart,
Be they e'er so little in thy judgment's eye,
Give them a sober ear. No good man's heart
Did ever yet betray him, nor prove false
Unto its master. Cunning, and craft, and guile,
Malice, and thirst of blood, and every ill
Do emanate from passion and the head—
Passion, that walks the ward 'twixt heart and brain,
Like to a mutinous captain armed in wrath.—
True hearts do never mix but in things good,
And are benumbed, insensible, and cold,
With any such who practise in foul vice ;
Therefore obey its feelings, and discuss it well :
For human nature hath a curious way
In answering Divine ends. Tell me thy dream—
I hope it tendeth to thy better cheer,
For I do love thee well.

CHIEF BUTLER.

Lo ! as I stood upon the barren ground
A vine crept suddenly from out the earth
And into three fair branches spread itself,
And climbing up it did enrobe itself
In leaves and tendrils green as the eye of spring.

And gradually they checkered o'er in hue
Of sodden yellow, and the hanging grapes,
That were as small and green as early tares,
Did swell and pulp them to a luscious round,
Lavish in purple richness ; over-bloomed
With fragrant dust, as blue as plumbs in June—
And lo ! within my hand there was a cup,
And I did pluck a heavy bunch of grapes,
And forthwith pressed them into Pharaoh's cup—
I gave him, and he drank.

JOSEPH.

Lo, you—I will unravel this your dream,
And glad your ears, and renovate your heart :—
The branches of the tree are three full days.
Within that time shall Pharaoh raise thine head,
And thou again shalt fill thy former place,
And hand his cup, and have thy Stewardship.
When that thou standest at great Pharaoh's side
I pr'ythee think on him whom thou shalt leave ;
Make mention of me unto Pharaoh's ear :
Do not forget our bondage, in that hour ;
Seek thou to do me good, and speak me fair,
For truly I am guiltless of the crime
For which I suffer this imprisonment.
A tissue of misfortunes is my life :
Stolen from my father in the Hebrew land

And sold into this country for hard coin,
I have no friend to help me ; only God
To speak for me, or listen to my griefs ;
Wherefore that man who works me any good
Doth hate my evil fortune, and I love
Him like a brother.—Therefore remember me.

CHIEF BAKER.

The dream is good, and wisely it is solved.—
I too have dreamed my dream : the whilst I stood,
Three white baskets were upon my head ;
The third being filled with all kinds of baked meats,
E'en such as Pharaoh's table used to bear ;
And presently the wild birds did descend
And eat from out thereof.

JOSEPH.

Thy dream too, hath
A marked interpretation—heavy doom !
The baskets are three days : in three days space
Thou shalt be hanged, at Pharaoh's high command,
Upon a tree, where birds shall eat thy flesh.—
Good and bad fortune thus on either side
Teach me some gladness, that I'm not the last :
Leaving me hope that I may win the first—
Between them lies content.

SCENE. — *Pharaoh's Palace.*

(*Enter PHARAOH, OFFICER, Attendants and Guards.*)

PHARAOH.

These dreams do trouble me past patience,
Something most earnestly they do portend,
For my spirit is feverish, yet dull as lead.—
Tedious perplexity and doubt, I see,
Bear no respect to kings.

OFFICER.

The magicians all, as knowing your desire,
Are working at the scroll, and tracing out
By mysteries and crooked subtleties
The meaning of this visitation.—
See where they come, but by their faces seem
As if they could not tell the thing at all,
Or find it dangerous.—

(*Enter MAGICIANS.*)

PHARAOH.

Now then, unfold
Briefly and plain your knowledge in mine ear ;
For I am anxious, nor can brook delay—
Pharaoh commands !

FIRST MAGICIAN.

All honour to the King!—

The aid of magic and the course of art
Have run their circle : but we cannot find
Within the mystic letters of our book
An answer to thy dream.

PHARAOH.

Fie on your beards!—

Fie on your gravity and silent lives,
Your figur'd robes, and antic mummery—
I'll never trust you more.—What is all this?
You tell me 'tis your office to divine,
And when I put a question of some pith,
Like stammering urchins cry, “ we do not know ”—
“ We cannot tell, it is not in the book ”—
Fie on't, your craft is but abuse,
Or you disgrace it in your ignorance.—

SECOND MAGICIAN.

My Lord the King doth judge us very hardly.

PHARAOH.

Go—go—I do bespeak you very truly.—
What can I do? how shall I know this thing?—
Without the knowledge I shall never rest—
Yet where am I to get it? Now by my sword,
I'd hold that man as dearly as my crown
That could unfold me this perplexity.

I would exalt him, and would make him feel
What generosity a king can pay
To those whose wisdom teach him patience.

CHIEF BUTLER.

Pardon thy servant that he speaks unasked.
I do remember me of heavy faults.
The chief of Pharaoh's bakers and myself
Did grievously offend our Lord the King,
And in his justice he imprisoned us :
We each did dream a dream. There was a man,
A Hebrew youth, imprisoned in that ward ;
To him we told our dreams, and he did straight
Divine them by interpretation,
And as he did interpret, so the fact,
In course of time, did truly come to pass.

PHARAOH.

Go, some, and fetch this man.—
The sweetest honey liveth in the weed ;
And boastless wisdom often may be found
Where magic never came. Eager desire
Scorns nicety of means. The invisible winds
Do fly our heavy sails ; and this proud pearl
Grew of the dullest fish of all the sea ;
Great mountains may be hid within a vale ;
And waking men yet stumble upon fate.
Never condemn the smallest thing on earth :

A drowning man did never scorn a straw ;
 And I, a king, do catch at this small thread.—
 Go some, and bid them haste.—Magicians, hear !
 You that are like the image by the fount
 Where water poureth from the gaping mouth,
 So fluent wisdom should stream forth of yours.—
 How is it, being a king, that I have aches ?—
 How is it, being a king, that I must die ?—
 Since wisdom is your craft, we'll settle first
 A simple truth that I have learned myself:
 No man was ever great in wisdom yet
 (Cunning being but a rotten bridge)
 That was not greater in his honesty.
 In such a soil the tree may grow to heaven
 Tho' rooted in the earth.

FIRST MAGICIAN.

Kings are kings over men :
 Nature, a king o'er kings.

PHARAOH.

O, mince it not—
 I am in mind to hear the truth to day.
 We are the golden mockeries of our age,
 And time doth look on us as other specks,
 Filling a common space in common tombs ;
 And as a spirit hovering in the air
 Thro' space doth muse upon our mortal acts

While bustling at the mart or robed in state.
 (Who, if the crown be off, knows not the king
 From any officer) so future time
 Doth look on us, or, sees us not at all.
 What is the greatest virtue of a king ?

SECOND MAGICIAN.

Justice.

THIRD MAGICIAN.

Mercy.

FIRST MAGICIAN.

Humility.

PHARAOH.

The last is best.—

Tis better governing the hearts of men
 Than their sick brains.

MAGICIANS.

My lord bespeaks him wise.

PHARAOH.

No, I have not humility enough.
 I had much rather to be fed on quince
 Than flattered, for I have been betrayed.
 Your garments are your traitors, hoary sages :—
 How gravity doth cover ignorance,
 As tho' it had within a mass of truth !
 It were a crime in any meaner man
 To think thee fool, because thy seeming's wise ;

And yet but now my dream is scarcely cold
 And all thy wisdom cannot unlace it—
 Nay, do not wince, thou dost expect too much
 For kings to flatter subjects.—Be wise—love truth
 Tho' it should lay thee open to the laugh ;
 For laughter is but second unto truth.—
 Say you,—humility doth take no towers ;
 It is the loveliest thing to give to friends,
 But tames no dangers or fierce enemies.
 How then am I, being a royal king,
 Open to knives, besiegings, and attacks,
 To wear thy cloak of sweet humility ?—
 When power confronts it, as it ever will,
 Humility must die in its own example.

MAGICIAN.

It hath the art, my Lord, to love itself
 By loving every other thing that's good.
 Humility, great King ! hath other names :
 Its own is all angelical. On earth
 It takes those names that ape the angel still.
 In war 'tis called mercy ; and in peace
 Its proper self.—In both determination,
 And a resolved soul to put away
 All spots which chequer truth.
 'Tis pure from passion, overflows of love ;
 Is full of sympathy for every good,—

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Its modesty admits no precedence,
And groweth from the boundless truth within ;
Its justice weeps at its own punishments.
Its power is fortitude ; its will, offence
To every evil gnawing at the world.
It is the greatest virtue of a king,
Therefore, for Egypt's good, O entertain it !

(Enter JOSEPH.)

PHARAOH.

How now, the man—we'll talk of this again,—
His presence likes me.—Hebrew, I am told
That divination and unfoldings wise,
Spite of thy youth, do wait upon thy tongue.

JOSEPH.

'Tis not in me : and yet let Pharoah speak,
A peaceful answer God will give the king.

PHARAOH.

Lo, as I dreamed, I stood upon a bank :
Out from a river that did wash my feet
There did arise seven kine, all fat of flesh,
And in the meadow straight they took to feed ;
And then behold seven other kine came up,
Unlike the first, withered, and lean, and poor,
So wretched, that I never saw the like
In all the land of Egypt till that time.
Behold, the last did swallow up the first ;

Yet no man should have known it, for they still
Were lean and empty, hollow as at first—
Then I awoke;—and lo! I dreamed again!
And seven ears did rise up from the ground,
All full of corn, and ripe, and fit to glean;
And seven others rose up after them,
Blasted with the east wind, husky and poor:
And those thin ears devoured up the first,
Yet shewed no signs of fatness. This I told
To sages and magicians, but none such
Can solve the meaning: if thou canst do it,
Pharaoh will reward thee.

JOSEPH.

All hail, O King;
The Lord herein shews Pharaoh his intent,
Thy dreams are one.—The seven wholesome kine
Are seven years: the seven wholesome ears
Are seven years: behold the dreams are one.
And the seven ill-favoured and fleshless kine
Are seven years, and the seven blasted ears
Are seven years; and they shall be
Seven years of famine. Lo! this is it.
What I have said to Pharaoh will surely be,
And God is willing Pharaoh shall foreknow it.
For seven years the field shall yield forth grain
In such abundance as was never known;

And after that for seven years the ground,
Sterile, and barren, shall not bear a blade ;
And famine shall go out thro' all the land,
And plenty be forgot ; and grievous want
Dwell in the tented cheeks of hungry men—
And, for thy dream was doubled unto thee,
God has established it shall shortly be.
Therefore the king shall cull out some wise man
And set him over Egypt at this time,
And cause his officers to follow him ;—
And they shall gather up from out the land
The fifth part of its harvest from this waste
And fruitful produce that will soon ensue.
This shall they do thro' each of seven years,
And garner it, and hoard it in the sheds ;
And when the seven years of famine come,
Then shall it be as precious as man's life ;
And Egypt's king shall live, and all the land ;
Nor shall they perish in the general want.
This is the truth.

PHARAOH.

Wisdom I see has left
Our graver beards, and taken covert in
The tongue of youth. Where is a man like this
In whom the spirit of God speaks audibly ?
I promised largely to the man who should

Interpret this my dream; and all shall see
I will redeem my word. Hebrew, how is it
Thy wisdom never yet did reach our ears?

JOSEPH.

Like the sea beast, the huge Leviathan,
Truth often swims at bottom of the world,
While dolphins play above his grained back :
So men o'erfigure truth.—The word of God
Worketh its secret way, and needs no help.
Like to a jewel, (hid in desert sands,)
Of wondrous lustre, old as the creation,
That finds its way into a nation's eye,
A matchless excellence of priceless worth—
So precious truth doth jewel the fair world,
Or buried, sleeps unnoted but of God.

PHARAOH.

Since God hath shewn thee all this secret truth
None is so fit or worthy as thyself
To govern in the land. Over my house
Thou shalt be ruler ; according to thy word ;
All men shall bow, and only in the Throne
Will I be greater than thyself. This ring
I strip from mine to grace thy honest hand,
In token that all Egypt may behold
How dear is honesty unto the king !—
How precious wisdom !—You do not rejoice

As one methinks so fortunate as you
Should do.—I see you do not guess the good
Which I intend you. If that grief or care
Hath ever rudely brushed upon your heart,
Frown now upon it, like a dangerous thief
Without your door, and fearing your rebuke. (*Exeunt.*)

(*Enter two OFFICERS and MAGICIANS, severally*)

FIRST OFFICER.

O 'twas a sight ! These sinuous arms of mine,
(That ever did love danger as a bear
Doth love a man, and hugs him till he dies,)
Would never let me 'plaud an idle shew ;
And I have never slept a sleep so sound
As after battle with marauders fierce
In hoary wilderness or mountain cave :—
And yet I swear I sooner would peruse
A sight like this, than the gory honours
Of my own scor'd front in the plate of steel
Reflected, of a new vanquished foe.

SECOND OFFICER.

Ne'er did my eyes take in so brave a sight.—
Cloths of all hues, velvets, and softer silks,
Like argent skirted as the frized waves.
Colours fresh and bright, harness of beaten gold,
And splendid tissue vying with the sun ;

Who, as tho' vexed with envy, shot his fire
In ardent scorn, o'er-gilding all the host.

FIRST MAGICIAN.

I pray thee what was this?

SECOND OFFICER.

The walls did groan.

The trees did bear more men than ever fruit.
No dangerous edge, but like a swallow perched,
Some rough Egyptian thro' his straining eyes
(Much like a hungry beggar at a feast)
Sucked in magnificence.—Plenitude fed desire :
Appetite craved past both. No man did know
That was his house, for still it was o'errun
By general feet ; all vacancies choked up.
Three parts o' the city emptied the livers out
And choked the fourth. It were an easy thing
For twenty men at arms to have sacked the thirds,
And ta'en the other gazing. Age, youth, brown, fair,
Were heaped spoils to wonder ; faces were
Like scored coin, huddled in heaps to pay
A tribute to the sight.—There was a buzz
Vexing the passing breeze, much like to that
As when a man doth put his wary ear
Close to a hive of bees ; and then a shout
That made old soldiers redden as they looked
Into each others' thoughts.—Oh ! it was rare,

SECOND MAGICIAN.

This new found Joseph's triumph, I suppose.

FIRST MAGICIAN.

Such boisterous clamour, and such thronged joy,
Is violent waste of human action.
The clouds do ever mock the bravest shew.
Splendour and glory are but folly cloaked :
Like to a cased mine, gold over earth.
Wonder, is ignorance ; pomp, bright deceit ;
Nightfall extinguisheth the garish shew,
And then the man must think. But some there are
Whose mealy brains will sleep upon the fact,
And yet be dazzled with it for a week,
As tho' the head were stuff'd with barred wheels,
Brightly working in contrarious ways.—
I have no patient ear to taste such trash.

FIRST OFFICER.

A sneap,—a sneap,—carry thy inky brow
And cloudy eye to those who love your caves,
Your nightly lamps, your silence, and your scrolls.
Your contempt herein is foolish, and not wise.
Come, come, I'll go about with you for this—
Your wisdom's like a giant of report,
That may be heard and yet is never seen :
It lives in men's imaginations,
Which ever yet did fool them of themselves.

Sometimes for proof you shew his heavy club,
His bulky garments, or his sandal old ;
And map the hollow rock where he abides.
Just such an antic game your gravity
Plays off upon the ignorance of men.
Allowance of folly is the stock he owns :
For so much wisdom he accredits you ;
And 'tis a chance i' the end, between the two
The man is fooled. We that are men of life,
Whose blood is purple with the lusty grape,
And purged with the scymitars of foes,
Have sharper wits, and travel and observe.
Now, I observe that you have wisdom,
Yet not so much as you pretend to own ;
Therefore your habit and your craft's a cheat.
Then what a monstrous man are you to rail
Upon this kingly festival to-day,
Because it is a cheat, and only plays
On man's imagination.—And I observe
Your gravity is envious.—Go to—
'Tis not the shew you hate, it is the man,
Whose youthful wisdom and diviner sense
Have plucked your mantles up, and shewn the hoof.
Why, man, by such a practice as this same,
You bray upon your own absurdity.
He who acknowledgeth a man that's wise,

Is counted wise in the acknowledgment :
 He 'scapeth ridicule, and balms his name,
 Tho' he do break his gall. If you will stay
 And hear me prate a little on this shew,
 Perhaps I may think thou flatterest not thyself :
 If not, choke on your prejudice.

FIRST MAGICIAN.

Not I,—

I have sometimes heard how kings have been deceived.—
 Things that are easy said are hard to prove,
 And craft can shape event to circumstance ;
 The circumstance may shame it in event,
 You of the sword do make a gaudy cloak
 Stand for the Captain, who at issue fails.

FIRST OFFICER.

Yea, many a coat is many an officer :
 Like a tame leopard that doth lick his pride,
 Which is his skin.
 Thus men of blood and men of supine thought.
 Meet at their brother fools when they pretend
 To undeserved gravity and fame.
 I do not tell you not to wear your cloak,
 For man is faulty in convictions ;
 But I do tell you not to lay the blame
 On others' folly till you purge your own.
 And so, farewell.

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(Exit Magicians.)

SECOND OFFICER.

'Faith, you have given his gravity a wrench.

FIRST OFFICER.

O, hang a fellow with a curled lip,
Where modish form and blank morality
Do med'cine to his spleen and crouching pride.
This priest is so moderate a man,
Half mild, half humble, fearful of offence ;
With wit which would be sarcasm if it dared.
Now I am one can wink upon a fault,
Can love the virtue, and can hate the vice
In the same man : my memory is long,
And a black act stays stamped upon my mind.
It is an easy thing to praise or blame,
The hardiess and the virtue to do both.
I know him well.—A soldier of estate
Once on a quarrel turned him cleanly round
Until he fawned on laughter and forgave ;
But when the man did fall into decay,
And to denuding poverty was bound,
The other crushed him in a dungeon.
Give me a man or either good or bad :
Slight folly or huge vices I can bear,
But out for ever on the bastard breed
That conquer all their villanies but some.

SECOND OFFICER.

What twin riders have just passed the gate ?
Their horses nimble heels do beat and bound
Fast as a ball that chafes towards the bourne.

FIRST OFFICER.

This way they scour abreast, as they did think
Light'ning was in the wind which they have left.

(Enter two EGYPTIANS.)

What, Pharaoh's page, and not at Court to-day ?

FIRST EGYPTIAN.

Is the scene over ?

SECOND EGYPTIAN.

Has the procession passed ?

FIRST OFFICER.

The sun is all the glory of to day
That you are like to see. It is all done.

SECOND EGYPTIAN.

I am like to one who has dropp'd a precious rose
Which the smooth tide did give me hope to get ;
I barely touch it with my fingers' ends
And then it sinks : so time hath hurried on
This goodly shew, for which my great desire
Has almost cracked my breath.

FIRST EGYPTIAN.

Tell us, I pray,

What fortune we have missed ?

SECOND OFFICER.

Why, sir, this much :

Fancy you see all stuck together close
As many people as a dream would hold :
Then, sir, you have a multitude as thick
As flies on gaumed honey newly spilt ;
All passive, downward, active at the head—
Behold observers.—First in the royal path
Came maids enrobed in white, stuck all with flowers,
Beating the ground with incense-scented palms :
Then came the sweetest voices of the land,
And cried, “ bow ye the knee : ” and then aloud
Clarions and trumpets broke forth in the air :
After a multitude of men at arms,
Of priests, of officers, and horsed chiefs,
Came the benignant Pharaoh, whose great pride
Was buried in his smile. I did but glimpse
His car, for 'twas of burnished gold. No eye
Save that of eagles could confront the blaze
That seemed to burn the air, unless it fell
Either on sapphire or carbuncle huge
That rivetted the weight. This was drawn
By twelve jet horses, being four abreast,

Pied in their own foam. Within the car
Sat Pharaoh, whose bare head was girt around
By a crown of iron ; and his sable hair,
Like strakey as a mane, fell where it would,
And somewhat hid his glossy sun-brent neck
And carcanet of precious sardonyx.
His jewell'd armlets, weighty as a sword,
Clasped his brown naked arms—a crimson robe,
Deep edged with silver, heavy with golden thread,
Did blush upon a bear-skin kirtle,
Whose broad braid, and shield-like clasps,
Were bossed with diamonds large, by rubies fired,
Like beauty's eye in rage ; or roses white
Lit by the glowing red. At his side there lay
A bunch of poppied corn ; and at his feet
A tamed lion as his footstool crouched.
After him, cased o'er in plates of gold,
I horsed, did bear an eagle on a shaft ;
From whence great Pharaoh's royal banner streamed :
An emblem of much might and dignity.
Then followed Joseph in a silver car,
Drawn by eight horses, white as evening clouds.
His feet were resting upon Pharaoh's sword ;
And on his head a crown of drooping corn
Nodded to the restless footing of the jades.
His robes were simple, but were full of grace,

And (out of love and truth I speak his praise)
I never did behold a man less proud,
More dignified or grateful to admire
Than was this ruler.
His fortunes nothing teased him from himself,
And he but filled his fortunes like a man
Who did intend to honour them as much
As they could honour him.

FIRST EGYPTIAN.

Why this was rare.

SECOND OFFICER.

Then, sir, this goodly company was closed
By the king's men of trust ; and each one bore
A banner of his office. Then came the cars
Of different men of state : some brass, some iron,
Some silver, and some steel. After, a train
Of officers and horsemen of renown,
All habergeoned and armed to the heel ;
Precious in shew as demons of the mine :
And trophies of gold and silver, songs, and shouts,
And multitudinous joy.—Forthwith they feast
Within the spacious hall.

SECOND EGYPTIAN.

Come, let us go—

We will make sure of that. Your brave report
Is as a spring that I do hear, not see,
Which makes me thirst the more.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE.—*A Meadow.*

(Enter JOSEPH attended, and HARVESTMEN severally.)

JOSEPH.

Now, are the men at labour in the fields ?

FIRST HARVESTMAN.

As thick as bees, great sir, and not one drone
Amongst them.

JOSEPH.

Let them not lose a grain.

Plenty sometimes proves coy, and like a maid
Who fears a waste because too easy won,
Will frown and turn upon your confidence :
Then wasteful prodigals do think on orts,
Pity your beggars, and o'er-beat the straw,
Where straggling grains are jewels.

FIRST HARVESTMAN.

I am come,

Commanded by your steward, to unfold
The issue of our labour. All the west
Of this great city, e'en from bound to bound,
Hath not a shed, or tent, or arched roof,
Where lay our city stores, but it is gorged
Brim full of weighty grain ; nay, not a crack
Or crevice doth remain of public holds

But it is choked with it, and yet men flock
With empty purses and with laden cars
Craving for coin, and sick at plenteousness.
I left some hundreds thronging by the way,
Out of all spirit that your steward paused
To purchase more till you had given command.

JOSEPH.

Go lade thy asses with two sacks of coin :
Buy all thou canst, and do not 'bate in price,
But pay the equal sum that I have fixed
For every measure. Because these men
Will race to rid them of their future bread,
We will not therefore in our better sense
Take mean advantage of their ignorance.—
Besides, their coin must every piece come back
When their need presses.

FIRST HARVESTMAN.

But, my gracious lord,
What can we do with such a waste of corn
Unless we raise a mountain on the ground
And leave it form a rind to fence itself ?

JOSEPH.

Call all the carpenters and builders round,
And over-pay them half their proper hire ;
And all the youth who have the strength to leap,
And all the old men that can touch the ground,

o

And let these last go out into the fields
And gather stover, rushes, reeds, and fern,
And let the first hew down the sapling oaks,
And bring them to the city, and there build
A granary to reach three thousand feet ;
And let the thatchers thatch it from the rain.
Cram that, and if the land still throws her fraught,
Then raise another.

FIRST HARVESTMAN.

I will see it done.

JOSEPH.

This officer shall go along with thee.
See that the men who labour in my rule
Are amply paid, according to their work,
At shut of eve. Without a metal spur,
That which I order will be slovened o'er.
The eye and appetite being over-fed,
Will turn the stomach of their gratitude,
And heaven's bounty will be scorned to waste :
A miner's eye is sick of swarthy gold.

FIRST HARVESTMAN.

The bidding of my lord shall be performed. (*Exit.*)

JOSEPH.

The air is never cold, nor burning hot ;
And usual extremity is sunk
In temperate days, and nourishing moist nights.

Birds swarm, and flowers blow, as if all things
Yielded to some magician's fantasy,
Laughter is heard wherever you can turn,
And men are fat as puttocks in a cage,
Fed choicely for the knife:—And such a turn
Would famine fain bestow on us withal—
E'en things of slothful life do feel the change ;
The crocodile hath left her slimy bed
Encradled in the rushes of the Nile,
And makes a journey over marsh and flat
To hide her early eggs. Fierce snakes do quit
The rooted bottoms of the lordly woods,
And prey in meadows. Eagles have been seen
To settle in the city, and the kids
And heifers do break through the pasture bound ;
A general and unchequered liberty,
Bred of this sudden change, doth tempt all things
To shun the habits of old circumstance.
Herein man's image too may be espied ;
As when a beggar finds a miser's hoard,
To right and left he scatters it away
Till he is once more brought unto a crutch,
And starved to feel the want of temperance :
And men will sleep upon a dangerous ground
And wink upon the earthquake underneath.
Great God doth jerk our judgments oftentimes ;

Raises the fear, or punishes the fault—
But out, alas ! once more the cup is full,
And sudden we are drunk. Men, in the mass,
Buy dear experience to throw away.
This lean and frightful famine now at hand
Will shake our city ; some two seasons gone,
And then comes waste, and old abuse, and want.
So the great moral is thus cast away,
And wisdom in the public walk lies dead ;
Men will be men, while God is merciful.



SCENE.—*Canaan, Jacob's Tent.*

(*Enter REUBEN, JUDAH, and NAPHTALI.*)

REUBEN.

What's to be done ?

NAPHTALI.

Lie down and die.

REUBEN.

Many a time

The pregnant harvest at its early birth
Has so o'er-run the measure of our need,
That the full bins have musted in the shed
For lack of use. Alas ! our famished want

Would fain be friendly with our former waste,
And give God thanks.

JUDAH.

Where will this end ?

Two seasons now are past, and we have looked
With hollow eye upon the fruitless earth ;
And looked in vain, for not a single blade
From all the thousand grains we scattered forth,
Comes in the emerald livery of spring
To cheer our anxious sight.

(Enter JACOB and BENJAMIN.)

JACOB.

How fare my sons.

NAPHTALI.

Idly, against our wills.

JACOB.

God's will be done : it is a grievous thing
For me and thee and all thy brethren
To feel the lack of bread.

NAPHTALI.

Come, let us take our measures for a grave,
And make us coffins straight.

JACOB.

To despair is sin.

NAPHTALI.

It is as well to wrangle with despair,
As sigh to death with hope.—What hope have we?
The wind doth whistle through our granaries
(Enwombed and hollow as a dead man's scull)
Lord of the empty space ; for the small beasts
Desert it as a thriftless tenement.
The paths that led to pastures and to fields
For want of use are over-laid with dust,
Old customs, too, that were our daily work
And daily bread, are bolted from our use
In the cruel seasons. June doth blow the grain
Back in our faces ere it can be sown,
And autumn yields us ample crops of dust.
All savage things that we do kill for food
Are thrice as savage, being scant of food ;
And leanness pays our danger.

JACOB.

Observe, oh heaven !
Old Jacob's heart is wrung for all his tribe :
A heavy freight, wherein he doth forget
Himself.—Have mercy, then.

NAPHTALI.

What shall we do ?

JUDAH.

Alack ! I do not know ; patience is tired. /

The weary months, like to a stubborn brood
Of disobedient children, still do swerve
From nature's docile rule, and mar themselves.
Heaven does not weep to see so sad a spring,
And therefore is she parched in her youth,
And summer smoulders like a smothered fire,
And bakes the crusted earth. Rivers dry up,
And the winter is all wind. Moist nourishment
Is sucked up from the land, and barrenness,
In all its ugliness, mocks at man's need.

(Enter SIMEON, LEVI, ZEBULUN, and ISSACHAR.)

SIMEON.

We shall be starved to death :—

ISSACHAR.

What farther ill ?

ZEBULUN.

Lo you ! we left ten cattle in the mead,
And nine are dead of hunger.

LEVI.

There is no mead,

But all the place that was a general swamp
Is as though struck by lightning, singed and burnt.

DAN.

Mountain and flat, low glen, or peering mound,
Hath cast its mantle for an umber gloom,

And summer's vestige only doth remain
In dying ivy or in holy sere.

SIMEON.

Our cattle languish, bellowing for food ;
And when they die, we lack the means to live.

REUBEN.

Famine is like the demon of despair ;
It swallows all the substance it can find,
Then preys on its own arms.

ZEBULUN.

Things of kine
We often see do feed upon their young ;
This famine eats itself.

JUDAH.

I turned a mouse
From out his nest by chance—stored in the hold
With nuts, with acorns, almonds, and with rice :
“ Herein (saith I) man's lofty pride's pulled down,
E'en by a creature that doth live in straws,
Had all my brothers had but half thy wit
We should be full and frugal, sleek as thee ;
Not like the empty lions howling.”

REUBEN.

Yea, man's chief lesson is man's extremity.
He never knows what precious comfort is
Till he hath lost it.

JUDAH.

How weary are our days
That used to pass in health and exercise,
In pleasurable thrift, and sweet repast.
Our nights were like a minute thrown away—
A draught of barm unto a parched thirst
Changed for renovation and fresh joy.
Now all our minutes fledged with leaden wings,
Are like to notes struck from a domed bell
By a vast giant with an iron club.
All that part of our days called musing vacancy
We find was sweet content; and all in vain
We try to touch the time with cheerfulness
Which hangs about us like a brooding cloud.

ISSACHAR.

Yea, who shall mend it? What's the best to do?

JACOB.

A general vengeance from the hand of God,
In heavy visitation on the land,
Is spread around : it is a bitter cup !
A little mercy at the bottom still
Was ever left for man's affliction.—
Arise, my sons : I cannot mend your wants,
But I do hear there is a certain man
Of wisdom and renown, who rules the land
Where Pharaoh, the Egyptian, reigns as king.

Go, get ye up ; carry your mules and sacks ;
Take money in your palms, and crave of him
To sell you corn, that ye and yours may live,
Nor linger thus in want. Go, every man,
Excepting Benjamin, my youngest boy ;
Him I will keep, lest danger by the way
Should be enamour'd of his tender youth,
And rob me of his sight.

NAPHTALI.

Better we may ;

Much worse we cannot be.

JACOB.

Heaven prosper you. (*Exit.*)



SCENE.—*A Vineyard.*

JOSEPH.

Time wendeth by us in eventful life
E'en as the trees and houses seem to glide
As we do pass them in a rapid car :
But as the wind doth rob the seeded grass,
Lodging it on some mountain out of sight,
So in his passage time doth steal away
The seeds of old remembrance, and but leaves

The fruitless husk of all our wealth of woe—
Of woe, indeed, for things of joy do die
Upon the action.—Joy is the grave of joy :
And all the past, that was so long a-doing,
Is swallowed in the minute that's to come.
New hope still smiles to hear old memory,
In long perspective, tell the tale of woe :
At best, joy touched with melancholy pain.
Just so I do forget my father's house,
Filling another place in this great world.
And now my grieved heart is worn as smooth
As wounds that heal, and leave a tender scar.
Youth is soon trammelled in new circumstance,
And man at best returneth to himself,
Or e'er his holy grief hath made him feel
Why God afflicts him. There is a precious door,
And to that door a precious court in heaven,
Where I do hope to see my father's face,
And all our house ; and shed no human tears.

(Enter STEWARD.)

STEWARD.

Great lord, the famine rageth in the land,
And the two barren seasons that are gone
Shew us no hope, but rather 'bate in strength
To recoil with more effect in stubborn wrath.

The men are fain to give you any price
For food to sustain life.

JOSEPH.

Be ye all wise

In the distribution : so shall Pharaoh see
He did not choose an idle officer.
Leave nought to chance that wisdom may command.
O love all goodly business for its end ;
So shall thy motive ne'er be put to shift,
And thou shalt teach success to wait on thee ;
For frugal plenty 'mid this general famine
Did grow of such wise means, and kills sad want.



SCENE.—*A Hall.*

JOSEPH, *on a high seat*, OFFICERS, CITIZENS, and
Attendants.

JOSEPH.

According to the household, the children,
The aged, and the young, so measure forth
Enough to keep each life, and take the coin ;
But give no more than need requires.—Strangers !

(Enter SIMEON, REUBEN, ISSACHAR, DAN, JUDAH, ZEBULUN,
NAPHTALI, and LEVI.)

What men are these? they are not Egypt born—
Great God! they are my brothers—sure they are come
Driven from valed tents in search of food.
My blood doth throng for passage to my heart,
And mounts again with an enforced flow,
Instinctive to look out upon itself,
Warming its kindred veins!—they are my brothers.

(*aside.*)

REUBEN.

Great ruler.

JOSEPH.

Ha! that is Reuben's voice. (aside.)

REUBEN.

Vouchsafe to look upon thy servants' wants.

JUDAH.

Peace, awhile—he heeds you not, but is
Steeped in internal thinking: true, he sees us,
But it is like a man whose subject has
O'erflooded his deep mind. His thought doth fill his sight?
The ardour of its bent is in his eye,
And shoots its beam on us, e'en as the sun

Looks out upon a lake—therefore have peace,
Lest you offend the man, and raise his wrath.

JOSEPH.

Have I then brothers? I have been so long
A shaft o'ershot into a foreign ground
That I have taken root and sprung to leaf,
And bear a foreign blossom on my boughs,
And they are strangers underneath my shade :
Yet they shall pluck of me the rarest fruit.—
The sight of them doth tug upon my heart,
And novel joy subdues my troubled frame,—
What men are these ?

(aloud.)

REUBEN.

From Canaan are we come
To beg my lord will sell us of his grain
That we and ours may live.

JOSEPH.

Nay—nay—

I see that ye are not Egyptian men.
Spies are ye all, or wherefore do you come ?

REUBEN.

Truly, no, thy servants come for corn.

JOSEPH.

Ah ! now I do remember of my dream—
I dream'd my sire and all my brethren
Should bow before me—lo ! now, and behold !

All but my father wait on me in fear—
Ah! doth old Israel still draw breath? my father!
My eye doth perfectly deliver him: I see him now;
Wherefore, I will not ask, for fear the sad
Recording of his death should drive that hence,
Then both the image and the substance too
Are 'reft me.—God's will be always done.—
I say, to pry into the land you come, *(aloud.)*
Like spies, to see its nakedness.—Tell me—
Have you a father?

JUDAH.

Thy servants bow the knee.
Thy servants are twelve brethren in the land,
The youngest with our father sojourneth
Unto this day; and we are those who came
From Canaan to your Egypt to buy corn:
And one is not.

JOSEPH.

Now this is it; I see that you are spies,
Herein you shall be proved:—by Pharaoh's life,
Except your youngest brother come to you,
You shall not depart hence—take them away—
(Exeunt attended.)

Oh! what a treasure have I found this day,
And what a curious circle have we run.
God, through their hatred, hath made me their lord:

They sold me forth, and now they beg of me,
My heart is still the same, and I will deal
With justice to myself, tho' not to them—
Yea, we must dwell together, and some way
I must design to pluck them from the vale
Up the high mountain, where I keep my state,
And we will live in better fellowship.

—◆—
SCENE.—*A Prison.*

SIMEON, REUBEN, ISSACHAR, DAN, ZEBULUN, LEVI, and
NAPHTALI.—*JOSEPH unperceived.*

SIMEON.

Three days we have been in ward.

ISSACHAR.

Were it the best

That we had died of famine in our tents,
Or that we wait upon this danger here?
I am much at odds.

REUBEN.

We are unfortunate;
Surely some mischief will befall to us!

DAN.

Ah! how cruel and unjust were we,

E'en when we saw the anguish of his soul,
To sell our brother forth to dangerous hands.

JUDAH.

It was a beastly crime, and I do hate
Myself whene'er I think on't; therefore I will
Bear all mischance that may accrue to me,
As 'twere my just desert for that foul sin.

LEVI.

Where'er he is, great God ! have eyes on him.

ISSACHAR.

It was too bad.

SIMEON.

Oh ! Issachar, it was.

ISSACHAR.

It was an evil thing, and I repent it.

SIMEON.

So, Issachar, do I.

REUBEN.

I told you so —

Would you had listened then to my complaint.
Said I not, “ sin not ye against the child ? ”
But ye were deaf and stubborn, would not hear,
Wherefore behold his blood is on our heads ;
For heaven hath a memory for these things.

P

ISSACHAR.

Since I have had children of my own
I've often thought upon my brother.

JUDAH.

Yea, what a coward it doth make a man;
For he who had the most to do in it
Would think him best if he had had the least.

JOSEPH.

O! let me find some shade wherein to weep,
For all my sorrows seem but as a day.
A little penitence doth quite absorb
An age of suffering—sweet penitence!
That as a holy flame doth burn away
The stubborn chord that ties us to ourselves. *(Exit.)*

DAN.

How mean a man becomes in his own eye
When anguish binds him to repentance!
To pity those on whom he trod before
And drove to the same anguish.

JUDAH.

Yea, it is true:

It is the way of men and hunters both,
(For human hunters differ but in this,
One preys for the hide, the other for man's heart)
To stand and shoot their random shafts abroad:

Sometimes they hit and kill—more often wound,
And the poor maimed doth languish in its pain :
So men war on their neighbours, or with words or blows
More merciless than tigers of the cave.—
What beasts were we to seek our brother's blood !

(Enter JOSEPH, OFFICERS, Attendants, &c.)

JOSEPH.

Albeit, men, I do suspect you spies ;
“ This do, and live : for I fear God.”—
One of you shall be bound and kept in ward,
And you, the rest, shall lade your beasts with corn,
And travel to your home and give them food ;
And when you bring your other brother back
I will release the bound and you shall live.
And by the bringing of the youngest son
You shall be proved ; for I do fear you much,—
Bind me this man. *(Simeon is bound.)*

SIMEON.

Remember, brethren, that you leave me here.
Unless you bring my brother to this land
My blood will sure be spilt. *(Exit.)*

REUBEN.

“ We shall remember.

JUDAH.

Thy servants bow them even to the ground,

And beg my lord will deal to them, as they
Shall prove to him. *(Exeunt.)*

JOSEPH.

Come hither.

Brim all their sacks, and give them of the best :
Send them provisions, and supply their wants,
And each man's money put thou in the mouth
Of each man's sack ; and see them safely forth ;
(Exit attended.)

For it were strange that I, who scarce have found
My dearest kindred, my own proper flesh,
Should deal less proudly with them : a little while
And they will be returned, and Jacob soon,
(If God be willing), and his goodly tribe,
Will enrich my anxious sight.—I long till then. *(Exit.)*



SCENE.—*Jacob's Tent.*

*(Enter REUBEN, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, DAN, and
NAPHTALI.)*

REUBEN.

Our food is gone, and what are we to do ?
We may not go to this Egyptian lord

Without our brother, for he surely then
Will deal with us as spies.

ZEBULUN.

And that I fear
Will scarcely be ; for Jacob did deny,
In wrathful terms, our hardly-urged request
When we did return into the land :
Wherefore Simeon has in danger lodged
Until this hour.

(*Enter JACOB, BENJAMIN, JUDAH, SIMEON, and LEVI.*)

JACOB.

I say he shall not go.—
Wherefore bereave me of my children thus ?
Joseph is not, and Simeon is not,
And now ye will take Benjamin away.—
All these things are against me.

REUBEN.

If I fail
To bring my brother back to you again,
Slay my two children.

JUDAH.

You say unto your sons,
“ Go forth, buy corn ; we famish.”—So we would ;
But that the man did solemnly command

We should not see his face until we brought
Our other brother down.

DAN,

Therefore, we say,
If thou wilt let him go with us, 'tis well ;
If not, we cannot go.

JACOB.

Why did you deal
So hardly with me as to tell the man
That I had yet a son ?

JUDAH.

The man did chide us, saying, " ye are spies,"
And often questioned us of our estate ;
How could we know that he would say to us,
Bring me thy brother ?

JACOB.

Benjamin is all
That I have left of Rachel's children.
Joseph is lost for ever from my eyes ;
And if you take this boy, and he should fall
Into the way of danger as you go,
You bring down my grey hairs
With sorrow to the grave.

LEVI.

Brothers, it is decreed we stay and die.

JACOB.

Not so—not so—Yet what am I to do?—
How was it that each man did find enclosed
His money in his sack? Is it common
To send the money back to those who buy?—
And Simeon, too,—Simeon did go with thee,
And he, you say, was made a prisoner,—
It is a dangerous thing, he shall not go.

ZEBULUN.

Why then we cannot go into the land.

JACOB.

Mischief will come if you do take the boy.

ZEBULUN.

And if we stay, both we and ours must starve.

JACOB.

And is it nothing, to lose children thus?

NAPHTALI.

One of two evils surely thou must chuse;
Either thyself, thy sons, and all thy tribe,
Must perish here about thy tent for want,
Or you must send the boy down in our hand,
And we will bring back Simeon, and corn;
And Benjamin, and all thy tribe shall live,
And if we had not lingered o'er this thing,
We had been down into the land, and back.

JUDAH.

Nay, let my father trust the lad with me,
I will be bond and surety that he shall
Return to thee again. And if I bring him not,
For ever be the blame upon my head,
And let my father shun me.

JACOB.

Take ye from out
Our scanty stores the dainties of the land ;
Of balm, of myrrh, of spices, and of nuts,
Almonds, and honey ; and let every one
Take double money, and also the same
That was returned before into his sack ;
Peradventure 'twas an oversight.
And take also your brother in your hand,—
Arise, and go ; and God be merciful,
So that the man may send back Simeon
And Benjamin : for if I am bereaved
Of my children, I am bereaved.

JUDAH.

Fear not—

The lord will know by this we are no spies,
And will return us Simeon to our hands ;
And, seeing we are better than his guess,
Treat us with courtesy.

JACOB.

Amen—amen.—

(Enter ISSACHAR.)

JUDAH.

Issachar, there's blood upon thy brow.

ISSACHAR.

Blood is more like to bead upon my brow
Than is a tear to tremble in my eye.
O! that this famine were incorporate,
That I might wrestle with him for the fall.

LEVI.

Where hast thou been these hours.

ISSACHAR.

Into the wilderness, o'er vale and mount,
To struggle with the panther for his heart.
Why do you blench, why do you stand at bay,
And let this famine tamely suck your blood?
Man hath a touch of the great elements,
In fierce distress he should o'erleap himself,
And ravage like an angel that is chafed;
His spirit, being press'd as ours is now,
Should rage within him like a furnace closed:
Behold rich fire to quench the wrath of fate,
Firm as the earth, like stubborn as the wind
That roars along the valley in the storm.

Yea, with repulsive power, like that which heaves
 The sick Leviathan league after league,
 Bruised, on the mountain backs of forked waves.
 Let us but think our former life hath been
 Idle and womanish, and now begin
 To play with danger as an exercise
 Fitting our manhood, and our lab'ring breath.
 O power and fortitude, I will have food !
 Why faint ? why die ? The eagles and their young, .
 The lion and the cub, still live as prey.
 When not the bosom of the earth hath roots,
 The trees bear bark to serve us for a need ;
 When there is nothing left us but the air
 We can but die.

DAN.

There is some comfort ;
 We are to go to Egypt to buy corn,
 Which the chief ruler sells.

ISSACHAR.

Yea, anything,
 Rather than yield to this extremity.
 Come to my tent, and browse upon the food.

SCENE.—*Joseph's House.*

(REUBEN, SIMEON, BENJAMIN, LEVI, JUDAH, ISSACHAR,
DAN, ZEBULUN, and NAPHTALI.)

ZEBULUN.

Why should this lord command us to his house?

NAPHTALI.

He doth intend some evil unto us :
And for that the money was in our sacks
I think it his design to fall on us
And claim our cattle and make bondmen of us.

JUDAH.

Yonder the steward standeth at the door.
I'll speak with him.

(*Enter STEWARD.*)

Oh, sir ! we are in fear
Lest that my lord is angry with us.
In truth, we came at first to buy us food :
And lo ! it came to pass, that at the inn
We oped our sacks, and in the mouth of each
We found our money in full weight restored.
Lo ! you ; we have it with us in our hands,
And other monies have we brought besides

To buy us food : indeed we cannot tell
How that our money came into our sacks.

STEWARD.

Peace be to you ; fear not, I had your money.

SIMEON.

Yet we do fear, seeing we are brought
Into the ruler's house.

STEWARD.

My lord did say :

“ Go thou, release the man that is in ward,
And bring him with these others from the hall
Into my house, and slay and make a feast ;
For I intend the men to dine with me.”
And therefore have I brought thee.

JUDAH.

It is strange !

STEWARD.

See, the ruler comes.

(Enter JOSEPH, ATTENDANTS, OFFICERS, &c.)

JOSEPH.

So you are come again to buy more corn.
I did repent me that I thought you false,
And when I heard your brother was come down,
Released the man from ward.—You are no spies.

SIMEÓN.

Thy servants all bow down unto my lord,
Like unto pines that stoop before the wind.

JUDAH.

Our father, seeing that my lord was kind,
Sends this poor present, which we humbly lay
Low at your foot.

ISSACHAR.

Venerable Israel,

Whose bulk doth bend beneath a weight of days—
Whose breast retreats, like to a hollow bank,
Inwrought by the long current of his years,
And overhung with scant and straitening curls ;
Like an aged willow streaming o'er a brook,
Where ruin tells that some old city stood—
Yea, even Jacob bids us bow to thee.

JOSEPH.

Ah ! say you so ? and is your father well—
The old man of whom you spake,
And is he yet alive ?

JUDAH.

My lord is pleased
To think upon his servants' past desert ;
Our father lives, and is in perfect health.

JOSEPH.

I have heard speak of Canaan : they say

It is a goodly place, and full of springs ;
That there are tents, and pastimes, green retreats,
Wherein you shepherds lead a happy life.

SIMEON.

It was my lord ; but famine and long drouth
Have marr'd its virtues.

JOSEPH.

Ah ! has it gone so hardly.

SIMEON.

Enough to starve us.—Surely, if my lord
Had not been bountiful and sold us corn,
Old Israel, and his sons, and all the tribe,
Had died without their graves.

JOSEPH.

Yea, this was much.

Yet you all live, you say—and who is this ?
Your younger brother that you told me of ?
Come hither, boy, let me peruse thy face.—
Who was thy mother ?

BENJAMIN.

Rachel, my lord.

My mother died before my memory
Had registered her face within my mind,
But I have heard that she was beautiful ; .
And oftentimes my father talks of her
Till the large tears steal down his silver beard ;

And oftentimes he mourneth for his son.
 She had another son, my brother, sir :
 Somewhat of him I fairly can recal,
 And of the doleful sorrow of the time,
 (My father shakes unto this very day,)
 For they say he was strangely lost.

ISSACHAR.

You do presume too far upon my lord.

JOSEPH.

Not much—not much—I can away with it.
 Yea, God be merciful to thee, my son !
 Methinks I've seen a face like yours before,
 And such a voice I know I've often heard
 In time of infancy ; therefore, good youth,
 Though our estates do differ in some odds,
 Our Egypt's custom shall be entertained—
 I kiss thy cheek—yea, on both sides :
 My courtesy is choice, but liberal.

BENJAMIN.

O, it will glad my father much, to hear
 Of your great kindness to his loved sons,
 For that I am Rachel's child and Joseph's brother,
 There was a vast ado to bring me forth :
 Old Jacob's heart was almost fit to burst—
 But even then he patched it with a prayer.
 Such, sir, is my father.

JOSEPH.

God knows

That I did know of one such man,
Therefore I'll love thee for thy father's sake.
The staff of such a man is honourable—
That is, if he be old and grasps a staff.

BENJAMIN.

My father, sir, is old.

JOSEPH.

Very infirm?

BENJAMIN.

Truly, time hath eat into his frame,
And he is such a ruin as is cheered
By plants and blossoms creeping over it—
And such are his good spirits.

JOSEPH.

A shrewd youth!

I'd venture much thou hast thy mother's eyes.

BENJAMIN.

I have been told so.

JOSEPH.

A blessing on them.—

All of you attend them to the Hall.

Go, you, and sweeten water for their feet, *(Exeunt.)*

For I intend they shall eat bread with me.

Take of the richest scents of all my house,

And bring the customary bunch of herbs,
Of myrrh, of thyme, of rue, and lavender,
And sprinkle all their garments and their heads,
And give each one to wear it in his breast ;
And in all things observe respect to them.

(Exit attendant.)

Go you unto the Hall and dress the board.
And he that is the youngest let him have
Five times of all the best beyond the rest.
Let them be set before me, face to face ;
And bring me of the choicest wine I have,
And richest fare.

(Exit Steward.)

Surely this will prove
Too great a trial : I am almost choked
With keeping back my tears.—O great nature,
I never did expect you would inflict
So deep a joy as this !—my heart will send
Its perfect feeling swelling to my eyes—
The secret is too big for one frail breast.

SCENE.—*A Room in Joseph's House.*

(*Enter an OFFICER and STEWARD severally.*)

OFFICER.

You are to load each man's sack with corn,
And in the mouth of that which is the boy's
Put thou this cup wherefrom my lord doth drink,
Mind that you know it not : see to it straight,
For they have left the hall, and take their leave.

STEWARD.

Fear not, it shall be done, and secretly.

OFFICER.

This being done, and all the men gone forth,
Take thou some servants and go after them,
And speak unto them even in these words,
“ Ye Canaanites, turn back unto my lord,
For he is wroth that you do thus return
Evil for good : which man hath got the cup ?
Yea, even the cup that was upon the board,
In which my lord divineth and doth drink ?
This cup is taken, and it is amongst you.”
Then shall the men profess to thee the truth,
And strangely look into each other's face ;
And each one, feeling his own honesty,

And for the general safety, will exclaim
Yea, he that hath it let him even die ;
Then shall they all unlade and you shall search,
(Beginning at the eldest) in their sacks,
So in the end it will fall out, the cup
Shall be found in the sack of him, the youngest boy.
My lord doth say they will not yield him up,
But all of them come back again to him.

STEWARD.

Yea, this is very strange.

OFFICER.

No man doth know
The ruler's act until he find the end.
I never heard that he e'er did man wrong,
Therefore his subtlety is wise, not cunning.
Have you a care of this, for such a man
Is marr'd in the practice when his trust is false.

STEWARD.

I am his steward, and shall know my place,
And love to do the thing that you commend.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE.—*A Hall in Joseph's House.*

(JOSEPH, OFFICER, &c.—*Enter* REUBEN, SIMEON, LEVI, JUDAH, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, DAN, NAPHTALI, and BENJAMIN.)

JOSEPH.

Ah ! wherefore hast thou done this evil thing ?
Wotest thou not that such a man as I
Can easily divine ? Was it so well,
After my bounty and my goodness shewn
To fail as you have done ?

JUDAH.

What shall we say ?—

What can we speak, my lord ? Behold, we kneel.
We are the bounden bondmen of my lord,
Both we and he with whom the cup was found.

JOSEPH.

Nay, God forbid that I should deal so hardly :
Only the man with whom the cup was found
Shall be my servant ; all the rest arise,
And go in peace unto your father's house.

JUDAH.

My lord is even bountiful in this :
Yet let thy servant speak unto thine ear
Nor raise thy anger, for thou art indeed

Even as great as Pharaoh in the land—
You, my lord, did ask us of our home,
Whether we had a father yet alive,
And of his children ; when thy servants said,
“ Our sire is very old, and hath a son,
The only flower and comfort of his age ;
A little one, whose brother is long dead,
And he alone is left of Rachel ;
Wherefore his father loveth him as life.”

SIMEON.

We all do love our father, sir, so much,
That we dare not return without the boy,
Lest it should break his heart, and we should lose him.

JUDAH.

Then said my Lord, “ bring down the boy to me
That I may set my eyes on him ; ” whereat
Thy servants, stooping to thee, said,
The man is old, and he doth love the child,
And if we take him from him he will die ;
And lo ! my lord was wrath, and did command
That we should bring the lad, or never more
Have eyes upon his countenance again.
All this we told our father, and the corn
Was all consumed before his patience came :
At length, sore pressed by famine and sharp want,
He did commit his life (which is his boy)

Unto our hands, and I did promise him
Never to ask a blessing at his hands
Until my brother should come back again.
And it shall come to pass, when he shall see
The lad is not with us, that he will die ;
And we shall bring down our own father's hairs,
Grey as they are, with sorrow to the grave.
Therefore I pray my lord to let me stay,
A bondman to my lord, and let the lad
Go with his brethren instead of me ;
So shall our father live.

REUBEN.

My lord will pardon me if I shall ask,
Hath he a father ? then with our eyes behold
The awful pain it is to have a hand
In breaching of the comfort of his age ;
Or so to pave the way of circumstance,
That his own sons shall be the instruments
To lay him in his grave before his time.

JUDAH.

O, be merciful to us, my lord,
And counsel us what is the best to do,
We fear to use our father cruelly.

JOSEPH.

Cause every man to leave me with these men.

(Exit attendants.)

Did you not say you had a brother lost,
Or dead ?

JUDAH.

Nay, he was lost, my lord, perchance :
He fell in danger, and is dead.

JOSEPH.

I am

Thy brother—lo ! behold !—'tis I am he.—
Joseph, thy brother !—And doth Israel live—
Our father, Jacob, the good and wise old man ?
I cannot speak, for tears do wash my cheek,
And I have scarcely breath to cry a welcome—
You cannot speak, for you are rapt around
In strange confusion of fear, shame, and grief.
You do not know how glad I am once more
To look upon my brothers.—Nay, come near—
Come round about me—Surely, I am he
That you did sell unto the Ishmaelite :
But I am he that will not think of that.
God hath a sure and simple way, my friends,
In causing mortals to enact his will—
Yea, good doth come of evil ; I was sent
Out of my father's bosom to this land,
To preserve life ; and lo ! what is become.—
God hath taught me goodness and glory both ;
Therefore grieve not, nor fret upon your act,

For I do say, 'twas God who sent me forth.
Reuben and Judah, I am dashed with joy—
Let me lean upon your shoulders.—Come—come—
Nay, do not weep—come in with me and talk.
I have much comfort for my brothers' ears ;
And much to listen to.—Govern your hearts ;
I may not pluck of them, they are too ripe.—
Simeon, or Issachar, bring Benjamin along—
Follow about me close. *(Exeunt.)*

—◆—
SCENE.—*Jacob's Tent.*

*(Enter JACOB, REUBEN, ISSACHAR, ZEBULUN, JUDAH, and
BENJAMIN.)*

JACOB.

My mind doth fear to trust to your report,
Like one who has newly found a precious mine,
Which, in the sounding, proveth all a baulk ;
And then the man dies not for what is lost,
But what imagination did possess.
It were a dangerous thing for me, my sons,
To trust to such a blessed dream as this,
And wake a common man.

REUBEN.

Believe it true.

"Haste you," (saith he), "go up and tell my sire
God hath made me father unto Pharaoh,
Lord of his house, and ruler in the land."

ISSACHAR.

And it is even so; for men do flock
For orders and commands in all affairs,
And those, the highest that attend the king,
Unbonnet to him.

JUDAH.

"Away," saith he,
"And tell my father to come down to me."—
And here his voice did chuckle in his throat,
Large tears, beamed by the spheres of his eyes,
Were held by hope, and urged by desire,
Till, 'twixt the names of brethren and of father,
They shot their beds and fell upon my hand.

REUBEN.

"Here shalt thou live," saith he, "both thou and thine,
Thy cattle, and thy herds; for there are yet
To be five years of famine in the land,
Wherein nor earing nor harvest shall be known.—
Tell my father of my glory here
In the Egyptian land, and what you see;

And tarry not, but bring him down to me,
That I may see my father."

BENJAMIN.

He did weep,
In such an agony upon my neck,
Almost to swooning ; and kissed me on each cheek,
And all my brethren, and wept so loud
That my heart ached to hear it.

ZEBULUN.

All Pharaoh's house did hear of his distress ;
And when the king did know we were his kin,
He did command that we should lade our beasts,
And come to Canaan, and bring thee forth,
And our's, and all our household ; and he said,
" Regard not of your stuff ; for all the best
Of Egypt, yea, the fat of all the land
Is yours."

JUDAH.

To each of us he gave
Changes of raiment ; and to Benjamin,
Three hundred pieces of silver, and five
Changes of raiment.

ISSACHAR.

There came by the way
Ten asses, laden choicely for thy need.

And yonder, you may see the waggons sent
To carry us and ours' into the land.

JACOB.

Oh, God ! I find that thou art ever just.
Let no man grieve again, but be resigned ;
That which we see as ill, God proveth good.

(Enter SIMEON, DAN, NAPHTALI, and LEVI.)

SIMEON.

Lo ! here are all the waggons and the food.

JACOB.

It is enough ; Joseph, my son, doth live ;
I will go up and see him ere I die. (Exeunt.)



SCENE.—*A Field at Beersheba.*

JACOB *asleep, amidst great splendour.* A voice speaketh
from above. The wind dies away.

Jacob !—Jacob !—I am He !—

The God of thy father.

Fear not to go down into Egypt,

For I will there make of thee

A great nation : I will go down with thee

Into Egypt, and I will also surely

Bring thee up again, and Joseph
Shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

(JACOB riseth, and bows down.)

Yea, I am confident, and much rejoiced.
I am not worthy of thy grace, O God !—
Who would not be a servant of the Lord's,
Who loveth men when they are grey and old ?
And cheereth the sad heart, and pours his voice
Into our human ears ? Spirit of God,
Who seest the evil things of Jacob's days
And art not wrath therewith, behold he bows,
Feeling the weight of so much goodness fall
All suddenly upon his aged head.
God's love is a tree of grace that never dies ;
All men may pluck thereof, whose sight is clear
To look to heaven, his bright pavilion :—
It nourisheth the soul, and the red heart.—
Since God hath said it, surely I shall see
My goodly Joseph favoured in his sight ;
And from the tribe of Jacob shall arise
A famous nation, favoured of the Lord.

(Enter BENJAMIN.)

BENJAMIN.

What, ho ! father, arise—the morning breaks,
And all our tribe are eager to depart.

JACOB.

How fares my boy ? is it so early ? yet
Darkness was but now upon the earth.

BENJAMIN.

The moon, retired in black embattled cloud,
And 'twixt her passing and the morning's light,
There was a sable pause. The birds are up,
And in the woodland, skirting 'round our tents,
With rich and mellow notes sing forth the morn,
As handmaids do, that bring the maid abroad
Early, before the splendour of the day
Shall see her wedded to some graceful youth.—
How did my father sleep ?

JACOB.

Well—well.—

The air is free and cool, and it bids fair
To be a cheerful day.

BENJAMIN.

The sun did sink
Amidst a gentle breeze, behind yon riffe
Of umber mountains, crowning their rude heads
With showers of light, of a mild roseate hue :
Not angry-hot, chequered with partial gloom,
As when in wrathful muteness he retires,
Foreboding suddenly of wind and storm.—
See, yonder he rises, veiled in a mist,

Shifting the huge grey clouds from out his path :
Just as a giant, 'merging from a cave,
Rolleth the rocky barriers from his hold.
He burneth his own incense, for that mist
Is gathered from the eastern mountain's brow,
Where it hath laid in drops of early dew,
Nursed in the fragrant laps of swathed flowers :
Of such sweet moisture doth he make his bath.
What a fine Spirit is our father's God,
Who moulded all this subtle beauty forth !

JACOB.

Aye, think on that.
Thou'lt find the doer greater than the deed.

BENJAMIN.

How he doth look like me, both young and strong,
But ere he sinks he will be like to thee,
Fading, my father, as we all must do.
Yet he doth rise again more fresh and bright :
Not like a golden garment, that doth fret
From its frail brightness, being worn too oft—
Therein he is so high above our heads.
It is long since a morning like to this
Has cheered our drooping hopes ; nor can it last,
For Joseph says, five years of famine yet
Will linger o'er the land.

JACOB.

Yea, God is good.

BENJAMIN.

Yet why should God put us to want and pain,
Seeing we can but moan, nor help ourselves ?

JACOB.

A little evil doth instruct much good.
The mind of man is stubborn to control,
And must be whipp'd into obedience.
The Spirit of God would fain be friends with man,
But man presumeth on God's temperance,
And drives his angel from his threshold forth
That he may sink to grossness and to vice :
Which goodness God's great angel would rebuke.
Therefore, lest man should fall into the beast,
And quite destroy himself from off the earth,
God in his power and mercy doth compel,
Through sore affliction that men's evil thoughts
Should be cast forth, seeing the pain they bring ;
And that they should incline their ear to good.
Whereat the love of God descends on them
As it would woo them to respect themselves.
All this is mercy ; for hard sufferance
Is the only curb to sway our wilfulness,
A moral given is worth ten thousand lives !—

O think not, boy, that pestilence or plague
Is idle execution at God's hand,
He is almighty Power, though great yet good,
It is a principle of power to feel
A portion of affliction, and our God
Can grieve. There's not a man his wrath doth bend,
But, ere he breaks him, he doth weigh his heart,
Hoping to find him worthy of that bliss
That honesty inherits.

BENJAMIN.

How say you, then ?

I have not yet had years to do offence,
Yet but for him, my brother, I had starved.

JACOB.

Thy question is offence enough alone,
For it lacks faith, which is a boundless space.
Each man that doth wear flesh upon his bones,
Offendeth heaven both by night and day.

BENJAMIN.

Why, then there is no hope to be beloved.

JACOB.

Go to—go to—God's mercy is so great
That he accepts the will without the deed,
When that the will doth struggle to do well—
How dost thou know that thou shouldst have been starved.

BENJAMIN.

Father, five years of famine are to come,
And we had got no means to gain us food.

JACOB.

Could not the power that made thy brother lord
And ruler over Egypt, also make
The earth to gape and render food to us,
In spite of famine and the shade of death?—
Come hither, boy, and let me kiss thy cheek—
How could'st thou say that God would desert thee?
He is the father both of old and young,
And loveth us as I love thee, my boy.
Therefore do have a care you ne'er again
Cast doubts upon his mercy and his power,
Lest that he should forget thee. I am prone
To think—nay, I am well nigh sure,
(Therefore look to it, and be virtuous)
That God is scrupulous to shield or grieve,
According to men's goodness, or their vice.
The evils and the passions we allow
To get the better of the heart and blood,
Do plague us to the allowance of our fault;
Whilst, like thy brother, those we practise on,
According to their meekness and content,
Do wear a happy crown compared to them.—
Nay, do not weep—I did not mean it thus.

See that in future you do honour God.
Yea, Lord, these tears I dedicate to thee.—
Come, sit upon my knees, I will unfold
The nature of God's goodness unto me.
My father, Isaac, blessed me in his age,
And sent me forth from Esau, by the way
That leads to Padan-aram : for he said,
"Thou shalt not take a Canaanite to wife."
And lo ! I journeyed onward to the well
Of fruitful Haran, where I met withal
Thy mother Rachel, whom I did espouse :
Yea, her whom God has taken to his rest—
But, ere I came, I gathered me some stones
And laid me down to rest within a field ;
For it was dark : and when I was asleep
A vision came upon me from the clouds ;
There was a silence almost to be felt,
And lo ! a mist was clearing from the fields ;
And all the air, and all the herbage round,
Was of sere umber colour, like to that
Which in the deepest shade of autumn dwells.
And lo ! there was a ladder on the earth,
The top of which did reach unto the heavens,
In faint obscurity ; and angels bright,
Like stars in ether veiled, descended it,
And did ascend, glancing th' umbrageous shade

With saffron-fire, such as the morning sheds.
And all the place did brighten at the top,
For God did stand there in his majesty :
And I, who slumber'd at the gloomy foot,
Did feel God's voice descend unto my ear.
Saith he, " I am the Lord,
The God of Abraham, thy father, and
The God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest,
To thee will I give it, and to thy seed.
Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth,
And thou shalt spread abroad to the west,
And to the east, and to the north, and to the south ;
And in thee, and in thy seed,
Shall all the families of the earth be blessed.
And behold ! I am with thee, and will keep thee
In all places whither thou shalt go ;
And will bring thee again into this land.—
I will not leave thee until I have done
All that which I have spoken."
Then the same deadly silence did ensue,
And all this shade and brightness was engloomed,
And veiled in utter darkness from my view.
And as I woke my joints did shake with dread ;
For sure, saith I, the Lord was in this place
And I did never know it. This is God's house,
The gate of heaven is here. And in the morn

I took my pillows up, of gathered stones,
And raised a pillar, and poured oil thereon;
And made an oath, vowing if God
Would be with me, and keep me in the way,
And give me bread and raiment to put on;
So I might come unto my father's house
In peace once more again, that God should be
My Lord and God.—Now mark, my son,
How far he doth o'er-pay his servant's worth.
He did exalt me unto wealth and ease,
Gave me a numerous and goodly tribe,
And ever hath been bountiful to me.
Thy brother he exalted from a slave
To be a lord and prophet, and to save
Our lives, amongst a million, from this wreck
Which he has seen it wise to bring about.
He promised us we should increase and thrive,
And be a mighty nation : and behold,
Now he doth prepare us for his will,
And brings us up to Egypt. Therefore, my boy,
See that you love his ways, and worship him;
That you and your's, when I am dead,
May be beloved and nourished in the land.

BENJAMIN.

I shall lay up within my memory
The counsels of my father, and fear God.

JACOB.

Why, that is well ; and you shall reap the fruit.
The tribe of Israel shall multiply ;
Their breath shall be sweet with honey, their teeth
White with milk, and their lips red with wine ;
The vines they pluck of shall grow by the wells,
And spread their trails luxuriously for them :
Plenty they shall have as they fear God. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE.—*A Vale in Goshen.**(Enter JUDAH and JOSEPH'S STEWARD, meeting.)*

STEWARD.

All hail to Joseph's brother !

JUDAH.

I think, his steward.

STEWARD.

Your countenance lives in my memory.—
An unfamiliar face is sometimes tied
About the neck of our remembrances
By something that affects our sympathies ;
Subtle in act, and entering the heart
By some peculiar passage that it holds.—
The sweetest evening, and the fairest star,

That ever I have lived to taste and see,
Passed in my early youth, with one that's dead,
In thought, and vow, and fine reflection,
Of what in future was to be our lot.—
It lives within my mind, a fadeless dream,
Wherein I see once more the deep blue sky,
And taste the fragrance of the jasmine bower ;
And feel the mellow beauty of the scene,
And overcount each precious thought and act
That the vast tomb hath swallowed.—Your face I knew,
Because I saw your brother and yourself
Weep in each other's arms ; a thousand since
Have passed me and repassed me, yet no one
Do I remember.

JUDAH.

Dust and travel, joined
To the long sitting of our jaded mules,
Make any change a luxury : sit down
Upon this shady bank, and straight unfold
The bearing of the ruler and his health.

STEWARD.

If that impatience be a malady,
(A disease which Time, like a vile subtle leach,
Who plays the tyrant as his power decays,
And with his medicine doth increase desire
As the remedy draws near,) then is he ill.

JUDAH.

You speak this ruler with a loving tongue.

STEWARD.

Each man who serves him is greater than his office,
And bends for love and honour more than thrift :
All his high servants are their own masters,
For he requires each one should proudly keep
His independence, doing his offices
For the people's good, and the general weal,
Not as for him. Bondmen he has not one,
Nor slaves, but what are kept for humble tasks ;
As hewing wood, and drawing of the well,
Which would disgrace the worst of all the rest.—

JUDAH.

He is a proper lord, and we shall soon
See him in Egypt.

STEWARD,

Not so late as that,
For he is come to pitch his scarlet tent
In Goshen's vale ; for, saith he, (his tongue
Being rich with honey'd joy) in mellow tone,
' The bearded Israel, Patriarch of his tribe,
' The son of Isaac, the sire of Benjamin,
' The beloved father of my favour'd self,
' Comes with his people, and his remnant years,
' To fill the sight and touch of me his son ;

‘ And ’midst the comforts of th’ Egyptian land
‘ (Far from the famine-eaten Canaan)
‘ Thank God, and live.’ Therewith he stooped, and leaped
Into his iron car ; the charioteer
Noting his haste, hallooed the fretful steeds,
And he and all his host are coming down
Into this hollow vale. I had command
To outride the slow procession o’er the hills,
And greet the aged Jacob in these words :
‘ Young Joseph, the dear son, is coming on
‘ To fill the father’s arms. Praise be to God ! ’

JUDAH.

I, as the herald of our father’s tribe,
Was sent before to greet my brother’s love,
And tell him of his joy and anxious eye
To behold his new found son.

STEWARD.

Let us to our charges.—
I hear the cymbal singing in the wind,
And they approach amain.

(Exit severally.)

SCENE.—*The Vale.*

(*Enter JACOB and his TRIBE, JOSEPH, BRETHREN,
OFFICERS, ATTENDANTS, &c.*)

JACOB.

Stand further back—again, let me behold thee.—
Ah!—and hast thou passed so many dismal years
Exposed to Fate's compulsive action,
Naked to chance, unfriended, and forlorn,
And I was glad and happy!

JOSEPH.

This is not well.—
I live, and am not dead; and God, you see,
Has honoured me beyond my patience.

JACOB.

True—true.—I am sick of love, behold,
As a pomegranate, shaken by the wind,
Strewing its mellow fruit with autumn's hand;
So has my ripened joy been shaken down:
And I am weak in body and in mind,
Feeling my years upon me. I thought my joy
Would root me, spurs and all.

JOSEPH.

Lean upon me.

JACOB.

Yes—I am better now ; but your old hearts
Are ripe to death. I have not wept my fill.

JOSEPH.

Pr'ythee take courage ; thy board is soaked with tears.

JACOB.

Never more precious dew from heaven fell
Than those rare drops that mingle in my beard.—
Silence did strive to suffocate my heart,
But sobs still vented life. Such an embrace,
Great God, must touch thy love.

JOSEPH.

No more—be patient.

JACOB.

Ah ! Rachel's child ! yet in thy manly face
I do behold thy lambency in youth ;
And the proud coat of many colours, made
By these old doting hands, I still can see
O'erwaved by thy young curls.

JOSEPH.

Behold me changed.

Now I am lord of chariots, and of horse,
Of men, and arms, and second to the king ;
Full of command and power.

JACOB.

Yes, it is much.—

Didst thou reward, in thy prosperity,
Those who were kind to thee, when thou wert low ?
Didst overpay their love ? I hope thou didst,
For they did do my office—my good child !—

JOSEPH.

Alas ! my father ! virtue that hath no power
To bring its own pretensions in the light,
Lives upon orts, and dies without a grave :
All the world neglects it in its life,
And it ascends to God, embalmed with tears.

JACOB.

Come, let us change the talk—we must all bear ;
I bore the loss of thee : yea, let it pass.—
There are now fled upon a nimble wing
A many years since I did hold thee thus :
Yet I do know thee well.—Joseph, art sure
The king of Egypt will not be wrath with thee,
That I have brought my tribe into the land ?
And yet why ask—thou art wise—all must love thee.
Come, let us go, and I will ride beside
Thee in thy car—speak to me.—

JOSEPH.

So thou shalt.

JACOB.

Are you ill, you look very pale ?

JOSEPH.

Behold me smile.

JACOB.

Come—come—Benjamin, take my staff;
I'll lean upon thy brother—'tis a bright day,
I said I would come up into the land,
Behold thee, and then die.—
I would fain live a little!—

(Exeunt.)

THE END.

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